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THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

By

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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FOREWORD

THE historic fact of the residence in Rome of the two great Apostles of Christ, SS. Peter and Paul, as well as the fact of their martyrdom there, was always accepted by all Christians the world over until very recent times. A few Protestant writers then questioned it, feeling with their fellow-religionists that the admission of spiritual allegiance to the See established by the preaching and the martyrdom of the Apostles would be completely and utterly dislodged if it could be proven that neither of them had ever seen Rome.

And with this preconceived thesis in which the wish was father to the thought, they began for the first time in 1600 years their malicious propaganda, whereby the supremacy of the Holy See, founded upon the residence and martyrdom of St. Peter, might finally be dislodged, and the whole story of the spiritual ascendency and primacy of the Popes be proven as having no basis whatever in real history. They asserted that the whole claim to recognition as spiritual Chief of the Religion of Christ arose out of the civic and social supremacy of the Capital of the Roman Empire. And so thoroughly in their desire to effect the downfall of the influence of the Papacy did they succeed among those of their own belief, that they prematurely gloried in the triumph of what was in reality complete ignorance of history and the distortion of true facts. Fortunately the traditions establishing completely the presence and the martyrdom of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, were too indelibly stamped upon the whole record of the Christian Church to be so easily and so lightly obliterated.

In the writings of the earliest Fathers we find undeniable proofs of St. Peter's primacy, his establishment of the See of Rome, and its spiritual supremacy over all the Churches of Christendom; and when a century ago the science of archaeology began to be studied and taught by those who, like de Rossi and Armellini, were acknowledged universally as master minds in this relatively new branch of knowledge, it became as clear as daylight that those pseudo-historians who had attempted to destroy the evidences of the primacy of Peter and his residence and martyrdom in Rome, were utterly undeserving the name of historian and were henceforth to be set aside as ignorant bigots, having no claim to genuine authority or respect. So true is this that all scholars, swayed only by evidence, have for nearly half a century now, whether Catholic or Protestant or Agnostic, come to the most convincing agreement that the Babylon of the New Testament was Rome and that there St. Peter founded the primatial See of Christendom, and that there also the Prince of the Apostles and his glorious companion, St. Paul, were imprisoned and suffered martyrdom.

When a man of scholarly mind and acknowledged historic ability has for thirty years devoted the closest and profoundest study to so important a matter, one may well expect that the fruits of his learning will have and receive their appropriate tribute of respect and appreciation from all those whose minds are open to exact evidence and unbiased judgement. It is natural therefore that anything relative to this subject coming from the pen of Monsignor Barnes should be read with keenest interest; because for a lifetime he has made a very particular study of the life, death, and primacy

of St. Peter, and, as a proof of his sincerity, he became a convert to that Church whose authority and dignity are founded upon the irrefutable historic proofs that that Church and no other was the Apostolic Catholic Church whose spiritual head is the Roman Pontiff.

The present book from the pen of Monsignor Barnes is, as might be expected, a confirmation of the fruit of all his former writings on the subject, and they are many and most interesting. With the true sense of the conscientious historian he sets forth with great clearness and deliberation the proof of the fact as confirmed by clearest evidence and never by any mere conjecture. In fact, one is very happy to see that where the fullest proof of any such fact is lacking, he honestly and frankly states this and awaits further investigation and proof before making any categorical statement. And this spirit of fairness and honesty which ought to be the mark and characteristic of every true historian, serves only to strengthen the conviction that what he writes is neither guess work nor prejudice but factual conviction.

On occasion he does not hesitate to question the assertion of very distinguished Catholic archaeologists, as for instance in his rather convincing description of the Platonia. Evidently this is a subject to which he has devoted very special study—the results of which deserve a respectful hearing, whatever the ultimate decision of scholars may be.

To sum up then, the present book written with such care and devotion by so eminent an archaeologist and devoted priest, will be read with the deepest interest by all who recognize the tremendous importance of the subject. It will serve to annihilate for ever the

sophistic arguments of pseudo-historians. Monsignor Barnes by devoting his life and his well recognized scholarship to the defence of the See of Peter will receive, as he well deserves, the thanks and the gratitude not only of Catholics but also of all those who desire to know the truth and gladly follow its light.

WILLIAM HENRY CARDINAL O'CONNELL
Archbishop of Boston.

PREFACE

THE object of this book is to reconsider in the light of two entirely new pieces of evidence the question of the residence and martyrdom in Rome of the two great Apostles.

1. The discovery and identification of the fragments of the great inscription of St. Damasus beginning HIC HABITASSE, *perhaps the most famous of all Christian inscriptions. The fact that these fragments were found in a place which was not a tomb shows that it was a residence of the two Apostles in that place during life which St. Damasus desired to commemorate.*

2. The whole of the archaeological research in Rome on this subject has been based for many years past on a particular interpretation of a date, 258, in a very ancient Calendar. Evidence is now brought to show that this date has nothing to do with the Apostles, but is due only to a copyist's error in the fifth century. These two new pieces of evidence alter the whole perspective of the question, and call for a new examination of the subject. The result of the elimination of these two sources of error is to simplify the whole question and to make it possible for the first time to reduce the whole story to a continuous narrative, which presents no serious difficulties, while giving full weight to every scrap of the available evidence.

During the last thirty years I have had occasion to write frequently on this subject. As most of these writings have been long out of print or are buried in various reviews, I have not scrupled to repeat passages where no correction seemed to be necessary.

My thanks are due especially to H.E. Cardinal O'Connell for the Preface he has so kindly contributed. His splendid restoration of his titular Church of San Clemente at Rome entitles him to speak with authority on the subject of Roman archaeology.

I have also to thank Miss Gertrude Lindsay for the beautiful drawing of St. Paul which forms the frontispiece to this book. It reproduces very faithfully a marble fragment which obviously once formed part of a very beautiful and important monument. It is catalogued by the Museum of the Campo Santo Teutonico *as belonging to the third century, but it is difficult to believe that such work was possible at so late a date. To me it seems to be work of the very best period, and if I were to venture upon a guess as to its origin I should be inclined to suggest that it may possibly be a fragment from the sarcophagus of St. Petronilla, which was brought from the Catacomb of Domitilla and the vault of the Flavians to a chapel adjoining Old St. Peter's by Stephen II in 752, when St. Petronilla was adopted as the patroness of the kings of France. It would then have been within a stone's throw of the place where the fragment was found, and where it still remains. In that case the date would be between* A.D. *70 and 90, and the artist would probably have worked from personal recollections of St. Paul. The fragment is obviously a portrait and not a merely imaginary head.*

My thanks are also due to Mons. Belvideri, the Secretary of the Pontifical Commission; to the Rector of the Campo Santo, and to many friends who have helped me by their knowledge on special points of archaeology and law.

ARTHUR S. BARNES

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I

INTRODUCTORY

FROM time to time one is surprised to find in controversial writings that there are still men, and men of scholarly mind and training, who are prepared to put into print their doubts as to whether St. Peter was ever at Rome at all, or whether we are justified in holding that St. Paul there ended his career by a martyr's death. The origin of their doubts perhaps is sometimes to be found in the necessities of their controversial position. Were it not for these the doubts might never have arisen at all. But, even if one makes all possible allowance for the prejudice thus engendered, it is still astonishing that men should be so blind to the fact that there are other sources of evidence open to us besides written documents, and that some of these sources are even more trustworthy than written evidence can be, inasmuch as they stand upon a wider base. Any single man or document may be quite mistaken, may be exceptionally ignorant, or may even lie intentionally. But the unanimous belief of a whole city, still more of a whole country, and most of all of the whole civilized world, to the effect that any particular event actually happened is worth far more than the testimony of any single writer or even group of writers. 'You can fool all the people some of the time, or some of the people all the time,' as Abraham Lincoln used to say, 'but not all the people all the time.' Or again, to put the matter in the briefer and more dignified way of the fourth century, we may take the phrase which so struck the mind and imagination of

Cardinal Newman, *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*: 'The whole world does not make a mistake.'

Written evidence, indeed, is not as a rule the primary foundation of our belief in any matters of first-rate importance. We do not believe in the historical existence of the Christ primarily because of the record of the Gospels, but because of the facts of Christianity. Suppose for a moment that the Gospels had never been written, or that they had perished as did almost every other Christian document of the times, in the persecutions of the third century—the essential facts of Christianity would be quite unaffected. The future of that religion might, failing any supernatural guidance, be rendered uncertain and liable to constant change because of the want of permanent written records of its origins, but that is another question. The point upon which we would insist is that loss of documents can make no difference whatever to the truth of historic facts, and can only affect our belief in those facts so far as details are concerned. The facts themselves stand firm and undoubted, proved by the effects which they have already produced. We should believe in Caesar even if every document of his time had perished and only traditions had survived, because of the effect his life and work has produced on the whole history of Europe. We should have to believe in Napoleon in like manner; or in the Great War; even in the absence of exact historical records; because of the changes produced on the map and in the political circumstances of the nations involved. So in like manner it is foolish to doubt the connexion of St. Peter with Rome, slight though the documentary evidence may be, when

we consider that the whole history of Christendom becomes absurd and even impossible the moment the connexion is denied. Those who would deny the traditional causes of acknowledged historical developments are at least bound to suggest their own alternative causes.

I

It must, of course, be admitted at once that the documentary evidence for the residence and martyrdom of St. Peter at Rome is very scanty. It is so, because these events fall outside the bounds of the canonical Scriptures, and because, with the exception of the Scriptures, hardly any Christian literature of the earliest centuries has survived. Of matter which bears directly on the subject of St. Peter in Rome there is almost nothing at all. If St. Luke ever began to write that third portion of his great work which we can hardly doubt he was contemplating, and which would have dealt with the work of St. Peter and the death of both the Apostles in Rome, no fragment of it, so far as we know, was ever published. If any other writer, and as far as we know there was none, took it in hand to give us an account of these things, that work too has perished and has left no trace. So far as contemporary documentary evidence is concerned we are left without any. One reason is no doubt to be found in the search for and destruction of Christian documents which was such a feature of the Diocletianic persecution throughout the Empire. The Holy Scriptures were preserved, though with the utmost difficulty, almost everything else perished. Most of the archives were destroyed, that is why we know almost nothing of the succession

of the earliest Bishops in most of the Sees, and why we know the names only of a very few of the martyrs of the earlier persecutions. Although only the Scriptures and the liturgical books were named for destruction by the actual words of the Edict, it would inevitably happen that other Christian documents and histories would often be seized and destroyed.[1] That would certainly be the case in periods when the proved possession of Christian writings might involve the burning down of the house in which it was found, and quite probably the death of its owner. Books written on papyrus quickly perish, unless they are constantly recopied, and copying of Christian documents must have been a very unpopular occupation in such times of persecution. Canon Mason in his book on the *Persecution of Diocletian* gives us from Coptic sources the story of a lady who was thus found copying the Scriptures and who was then stripped naked, smeared with honey, and left in the blazing sun to be stung by the flies and wasps. Under such circumstances it is not so wonderful that so much has perished, as that anything at all of Christian literature of the period should have survived.

2

As the documentary evidence available is but slight for the reasons we have stated, so also there is naturally not very much archaeological material available. Times of persecution, when Christian churches and places of meeting which have been erected during periods of comparative quiet are ruthlessly destroyed on the issue of some fresh edict a few years later, are not favourable to the survival of architectural monu-

[1] See Allard, *Persécution de Dioclétien*, p. 193, for instances. Cf. especially the account of the raid at Cirta. Migne, P. L., xliii, p. 794.

ments. Inscriptions of an historical character are not set up so long as their discovery might lead to fresh persecutions and even martyrdoms. Even pictures and emblems tend to be of a wholly non-committal character—such as would speak to the initiated while they gave no message to the enemy. On the religious doctrines of the early Church these pictures and emblems can be eloquent. The mystic Fish speaks to us of the Divinity of Christ, for the Greek letters which make its name spell out for us 'Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour'. The basket with the fish and the bread and the wine tells us that the belief in those earliest centuries in the Eucharist was the same as our own; the pictures of the giving of the Law to Moses, with Peter's features, or his actual name, tell us of the Primacy of the Holy See. But on historical matters, directly dealt with, archaeology is almost necessarily silent in times of persecution. Its indirect evidence on the other hand is plentiful and convincing.

To put some of the evidence before the English-speaking reader is one of the purposes of this volume; for to Englishmen it is too often a sealed book. Yet it is of considerable and often of convincing importance, and is admirably summed up by Professor Lanciani in his excellent book on *Pagan and Christian Rome*.

'I write', he says, 'about the monuments of ancient Rome from a strictly archaeological point of view, avoiding questions which pertain to religious controversy. For the archaeologist the presence and execution of SS. Peter and Paul in Rome are facts established beyond a shadow of doubt by purely monumental evidence.

There is no event of the imperial age and of imperial Rome which is attested by so many noble structures, all of

which point to the same conclusion, . . . the presence and execution of the apostles in the capital of the empire. When Constantine raised the monumental basilicas over their tombs on the Via Cornelia and the Via Ostiensis; when Eudoxia built the church ad Vincula; when Damasus put a memorial tablet in the Platonia ad Catacumbas; when the houses of Pudens and Aquila and Prisca were turned into oratories; when the name of Nymphae Sancti Petri was given to the springs in the catacombs of the Via Nomentana; when the twenty-ninth day of June was accepted as the anniversary of St. Peter's execution; when Christians and pagans alike named their children Peter and Paul; when sculptors, painters, medallists, goldsmiths, workers in glass and enamel, and engravers of precious stones, all began to produce in Rome the likeness of the apostles at the beginning of the second century, and continued to do so until the fall of the empire; must we consider them all as labouring under a delusion, or as conspiring in the commission of a gigantic fraud? Why were such proceedings accepted without protest from whatever city, from whatever community, if there were any other which claimed to own the genuine tombs of SS. Peter and Paul? These arguments gain more value from the fact that the evidence on the opposite side is purely negative. It is one thing to write of these controversies at a distance from the scene of the events, in the seclusion of one's own library; but quite another to study them on the spot, and to follow the events where they took place. If my readers had the opportunity of witnessing the discoveries made lately in the Cemeterium Ostrianum, and the Platonia ad Catacumbas; or of examining Grimaldi's manuscripts and drawings relating to the old basilica of Constantine; or Carrara's account of the discoveries made in 1776 in the house of Aquila and Prisca, they would surely banish from their minds the last shade of doubt.'[1]

To one who lives in Rome and is acquainted at first

[1] Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 125.

hand with the evidence in question it appeals of course with much greater force. It is, as Professor Lanciani says, one thing to write about these matters from the far-off seclusion of an Oxford or Cambridge study, and quite another to visit and examine for oneself, as the spade reveals them, the monuments and other traces which have come down to us from the past ages. History in those circumstances begins to come alive in a way that it never does from the mere reading of books at home.

3

Even the slight documentary evidence which we have, insufficient as each item may possibly be if it is brought forward alone as a proof of the presence and death of St. Peter in Rome, is by no means unimpressive if considered as a whole, and used not so much as fundamental proof as by way of additional support to a conclusion already accepted on other and wider grounds. Slight each testimony may be, and it could not be otherwise when the general paucity of Christian documents of the first centuries is considered, but at least it is early and comes to us from widely separated sources.

First, then, with regard to Holy Scripture. It must not be forgotten that there are only two or three books of the New Testament in which we could reasonably expect to find the record of St. Peter's death, or any allusion to it. These are the Gospel according to St. John, the Apocalypse of the same Apostle, and perhaps also the Epistle to the Hebrews. All the other books were probably written before the martyrdom occurred. This consideration reduces the argument from the

silence of the New Testament to its true value, especially when we notice that, as we shall presently proceed to show, there is a tolerably clear allusion to the martyrdom to be found in each of these books in which alone it is possible.

We have three points to be proved. First, that St. Peter was at Rome. Secondly, that he was martyred by crucifixion. Thirdly, that his crucifixion took place in Rome. For all these three statements there is evidence forthcoming outside of the Sacred Scriptures. We shall now show that there is also a certain amount of testimony bearing on each of the three points to be found in the Bible itself, which testimony, although it may be scarcely sufficient by itself to establish any of these positions, is by no means without value when it is considered as confirming what is already known from other sources. That St. Peter was at Rome in the course of his ministry is proved by the fact that he dates his first Epistle from that city under the name of Babylon. That Babylon in this place must be taken to denote the imperial city, and cannot be referred to either the ancient Babylon in Chaldea or to the fortress of that name in Egypt, is a matter on which all scholars are now agreed, and which may be taken as beyond controversy. Ancient writers are absolutely unanimous on this point, without even a single exception. Catholic writers in all ages have maintained the same, and of late years almost all other scholars, whether Protestant or Rationalistic, have given their adherence to this view; so that, as we have already said, it seems now unlikely that any really competent writer will ever again be found to maintain the opposite opinion. A point, the traditional and Catholic inter-

pretation of which is upheld by such Anglicans as Lightfoot, Ellicott, Farrar, Westcott, Gore, Chase, Hort, Salmon, Kidd, Ramsay, Foakes Jackson, and Lake, and also by Lietzmann, Wieseler, Harnack, Hilgenfeld, Renan, Zahn, Thiersch, and Ewald, with very many others among the non-Catholic writers of the Continent, may fairly claim to be considered as thoroughly established, and to be outside the field of controversy. We will make but one quotation, which shall be from Dr. Kirsopp Lake, by whom the discussion on the point is summed up as follows: 'There is an overwhelming weight of opinion in favour of the view that Rome is here intended.'

That St. Peter was put to death by crucifixion is asserted almost in so many words in the Gospel of St. John. The Apostle is obviously speaking of a fact known to all when he tells us how our Lord's prophecy about St. Peter's death, that his hands should be stretched out upon the cross, had been literally fulfilled. 'This He said, signifying the death by which he should glorify God' (John xxi. 19). To 'stretch out the hands' is used in this sense of crucifixion by heathen writers; *brachia patibulo explicuerunt*, for instance, is a phrase employed by Seneca; and no doubt, even at that time, and before the event, the words of our Lord had been commonly understood to mean that St. Peter should pass to his reward by a death upon the cross.

It is almost unreasonable to demand a proof from the Scriptures that not only did St. Peter live at Rome and die by crucifixion, but that this crucifixion took place at Rome, seeing that there are only one or two books in which we could expect to find anything on this point, and that these books are not of an historical

character. Nevertheless there is an allusion in the Apocalypse which is very generally interpreted as referring to that event. In the judgement pronounced upon heathen Rome under the name of Babylon (and here it should be noted, Protestant writers can see no difficulty at all, but quite the reverse, in interpreting Babylon as the equivalent of Rome) the following passage occurs: 'Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath judged your judgement upon her' (Apoc. xviii. 20). If the Apostles for whose murder Rome was judged be not St. Peter and St. Paul, it seems difficult to assign any intelligible meaning to the passage.

Professor Cuthbert Turner would go further, and would see in the 'Two Witnesses' of Chapter XI the two great Apostles. Here I own I cannot follow him. To me 'the great city spiritually called Sodom and Egypt' is not Rome but rather the fallen pre-Christian world into which Christ came and in which He died, and the two Witnesses are the Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian Churches, at that time not yet fully one in all respects, who are called out of that world and bear their witness continually, ever persecuted in their members, ever dying, and ever rising again. They achieve at last full unity through this suffering, so that there is but one dead body (xi. 8. τὸ πτῶμα αὐτῶν).

But the Professor shall speak for himself.

'Why not', he says, 'translate the Greek word literally as Martyrs? . . . Who then were the two Martyrs? They are described in terms borrowed from the Old Testament descriptions of Moses and Elias; but Moses and Elias had nothing to do with Rome and were neither of them martyred. But there were two martyrs of the first persecution, whose names were

always associated in Christian tradition with Nero the first great persecutor, the two greatest figures in early Christian history, St. Peter and St. Paul. I believe myself that the Seer of the Apocalypse gives the earliest expression in extant Christian literature to the combination of the memory of the two great Apostles. Before the first century reached its close the two names were enshrined in common in the minds of all members, Jewish or Gentile, of the one Universal Church.'[1]

This completes the evidence from Holy Scripture, which, scanty as it is, is nevertheless more explicit than we have any right *a priori* to expect, so far at least as the martyrdom of the Apostle is concerned. We pass next to tradition, and here the evidence is full and uniform in favour of Rome.

The strong point in the evidence of the later fathers is their unanimity. It is quite clear that no other place than Rome was known to them as claiming to have been the scene of St. Peter's death and the repository of his relics. Hence it is not surprising that there should not be many scholars willing to attack so strong a position, and the marvel is rather that there should have been any 'so hardily sceptical', as the late Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester phrased it, 'as to reject altogether evidence as strong, early and wide as that on which we believe that Hannibal invaded Italy'.

We will deal only with the evidence of the very earliest writers. From Rome itself, in the first authoritative document that we possess after the Sacred Canon is closed, we have the letter of the Roman Church to that of Corinth, written by St. Clement, the fellow worker both of Peter and of Paul, within, at most, twenty-five years of their death. It speaks of 'the

[1] C. Turner, *Catholic and Apostolic*, p. 220.

martyrdom of Peter and Paul among us'. When St. Ignatius of Antioch some twenty years later writes to the Romans 'I do not command you like St. Peter and St. Paul', the words are pointless and meaningless unless we can refer them to the authority exercised by those two great Apostles at Rome within the memory of some at least among those to whom he is writing. From Syria comes the Ebionite document known as 'The Preaching of Peter'. Its whole argument rests on the undisputed fact that the scene of St. Peter's preaching had been laid at Rome. It was no object for the Ebionite heretics to show this, rather the reverse, for their desire was to make James and not Peter the head of the Church. A recently recovered fragment of the very early 'Apocalypse of Peter' gives the same testimony:[1]

One more testimony we quote from Professor Harnack:

'Porphyry in Macarius Magnes (ii. 22) writes "Peter is recorded to have been crucified after pasturing the lambs for several months". This passage must refer to his residence at Rome, and its testimony is all the more weighty as Porphyry himself lived for a long while in Rome and had close dealings with the local Christianity.'[2]

It is of no use labouring the point further in such a book as this. The whole matter may be well summed up in the words of Döllinger: 'That St. Peter worked in Rome is a fact so abundantly proved and so deeply imbedded in the earliest Christian history, that whoever treats it as legend ought in consistency to treat the whole of the earliest church history as legendary or at least as quite uncertain.'

[1] M. R. James in *Journal of Theol. Studies*, April 1931, p. 271.

[2] Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, i. 71.

4

There is another argument, of considerable force in these matters, which is derived from the idea of the Church, not necessarily considered as being supernaturally aided and directed, but simply as being a highly organized body, analogous to bodies similarly highly organized as known to biological science. The highest order of such bodies in biology are those which possess a permanent head and other permanent functions, each complementary the one to the others, and all unified by their connexion with the common brain or sensorium. Among social bodies of men the Church of Rome pre-eminently fulfils this definition. The argument has been brilliantly stated by the late Mr. W. H. Mallock.

'The result which possession of this complete organic character has on the Church of Rome as a teaching body is obvious. Being thus endowed with a single brain, the Church is endowed also with a continuous historic memory; is constantly able to explain and to re-state doctrine, and to attest as if from personal experience the facts of its earliest history. Is doubt thrown on the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ? The Church of Rome replies, "I stood at the door of the Sepulchre myself. My eyes saw the Lord come forth. My eyes saw the cloud receive Him." Is doubt thrown upon Christ's miraculous birth? The Church of Rome replies, "I can attest the fact even if no other can; for the angel said 'Hail' in my ear as well as Mary's."'[1]

Is doubt thrown, perhaps we may add, upon the residence and death of Peter in Rome? The Church of Rome replies, 'I never can forget the great Saint who in the Providence of God was sent to be my founder, and to give his life in my presence by a martyr's death to prove the truth and sincerity of his message.'

[1] Mallock, *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*, p. 197.

In other words, there is such a thing in any highly organized community as a collective memory, analogous to the memory of a single individual, and quite independent of written records, and to that memory, in matters that affect the community, appeal may justly and rightly be made. Nor will any be found to deny that the local Church of Rome has always been thus highly organized, and capable of exercising such powers of memory, beyond almost any other community that can be named.

There is another line of evidence of which scarcely any notice has as yet been taken by English writers, the value of which nevertheless is very great in confirming the conclusions to which we have already been led. This evidence is derived from the traditional portraits of St. Peter and St. Paul which have undoubtedly been preserved at Rome.

'There is no doubt', writes Professor Lanciani in another place, 'that the likenesses of St. Peter and St. Paul have been carefully preserved in Rome ever since their lifetime, and that they were familiar to every one, even to school-children. These portraits have come down to us by scores. They are painted in the cubiculi of the Catacombs, engraved in gold leaf in the so-called *vetri cemeteriali*, cast in bronze, hammered in silver or copper, and designed in mosaic. The type never varies. St. Peter's face is full and strong with short curly hair and beard, while St. Paul appears more wiry and thin, slightly bald, with a long pointed beard. The antiquity and the genuineness of both types cannot be doubted.'[1]

Now the significance of this fact will be made clear when we remember that it is only of these two Apostles that anything of the kind can be said. So far as Christian art is concerned, for we leave out of present

[1] Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 212.

consideration such instances as the handkerchief of St. Veronica, no authentic type can be shown to have existed in the earliest centuries which was universally accepted as preserving the likeness either of our Lord Himself or of His Blessed Mother. Nor have we any portrait which we can consider with any strong probability to be that of any other of the Apostles. There are authentic portraits in existence of St. Peter and St. Paul, and, perhaps, of no other member of the Christian Church who lived in the apostolic age. Moreover, even in the case of these two Apostles, the portraits are confined to Rome alone, and are not found to exist elsewhere. Is not the conclusion clear, that we have portraits of these two, and of no one else, because they alone were the Apostles of Rome, the place where the art of portrait-taking was in fullest vigour? It is not too much to say that the existence of these portraits is by itself enough to prove, even if all documentary evidence and all tradition had perished, that these two Apostles had visited Rome, and were both of them in some way closely connected with the imperial city.

5

In these different ways the evidence for the actual fact of the residence and death of the two Apostles in Rome is so strong and varied that it will be denied by none except those 'hardy sceptics' whose controversial position demands the denial, and to whom, therefore, the wish is father to the thought. Still for the details of their life and death we are dependent almost solely upon tradition. The time is past when the witness of tradition will be altogether refused even in Protestant

England. Few things have been more remarkable in the history of criticism during the last half-century, than the gradual recognition once more of the value of traditions that had been too lightly discarded. The whole recent movement in the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, as Professor Harnack has admitted, has been 'back towards tradition'. The movement in archaeology has been no less marked. Again and again have traditions, which a few years before had been set aside as worthless by the new 'documentary' school, shown the way to the most important discoveries. The discovery of the ruins of Troy and Mycenae, the revelation of a whole lost civilization in Crete, and still more lately at Ur of the Chaldees, are notable instances. In Rome itself we have witnessed the same movement of thought. There about the middle of the last century the negative school of German criticism had almost succeeded in wiping out from the text-books the names of the founders of the City and those of the kings and heroes of the early Republic. Everything before the Punic Wars was dismissed as mythical, and even the historians of the Punic Wars themselves were only to be trusted with the very greatest reserve. Then came reaction. Slowly and by degrees, under the pressure of fresh evidence yielded by the spade, complete, absolute, undeniable, the novel opinions were shown to be unfounded even where only details were concerned, and Rome was once more, as Professor Lanciani wrote, 'delivered from the attacks of the barbarians'. Still more slowly, so slowly that hardly yet have English writers been affected, so universally unaware are most of them of the results of scientific Christian archaeology, the same thing has

been happening with regard to the Apostles in Rome. Every year the evidence has been steadily strengthened by monumental discoveries, which have as yet by no means been exhausted. Tradition, checked in this way at every point by historical, topographical, and archaeological considerations, has always approved itself as being among the most trustworthy of all sources of information about bygone ages.

6

On the other hand, nothing could be more disastrous than to pin ourselves too definitely to the acceptance of all traditions, however late or however slightly founded. There is, unfortunately, a tendency, innate in human testimony, to make a story more and more marvellous as time goes on and the occasion of the actual happening becomes more remote. It will be instructive at this point if we spend a few moments in discussing one such 'tradition' concerning the Apostles which we have no hesitation in at once rejecting, and explaining the grounds on which we do so.

Those who have visited the crypts of St. Peter's will probably remember that they were shown a large slab of porphyry, with an ancient inscription close by which states that it was upon this slab of porphyry that the division of the Apostles was carried out by St. Sylvester. This slab is the 'mensa' of the old altar *De Ossibus*. The story to which the inscription alludes appears first, so far as we are aware, in a work by Johannes Beleth, published in 1162, with the title *Divinorum officiorum, ac eorundem rationum brevis explicatio.* He is treating of the feast of 'the Division of the Apostles', which occurs in many ancient martyrologies

and calendars on 15 July, on which day it is still kept in many parts of the Church. He first states, perfectly correctly, that this feast commemorates the separation of the Apostles when they left Jerusalem to go to preach the Gospel in all parts of the world, but then goes on to say that 'some think that it refers to the division of St. Peter and St. Paul' of which he has already spoken elsewhere. On following up his reference we find the following story.

'The bodies of these two Apostles were laid in the same place and in the same tomb. But when after the conversion of the Roman emperor, Christianity began to grow and flourish, a separate church was built in honour of each Apostle. It was necessary, accordingly, to separate the bodies, but the authorities could not tell which were Peter's bones and which Paul's. They therefore set themselves to fast and to pray, and an answer was given them from Heaven to the effect that the larger bones belonged to the Preacher, and the smaller to the Fisherman. They were then separated one from another in accordance with this answer, and placed in their respective churches.'

Durandus, who wrote in the following century, carries the fable a step farther. He puts it as the first and authentic meaning of the feast, and merely adds at the end that some do say that it commemorates the parting at Jerusalem. Otherwise he tells the story just as Beleth does, but with the fresh detail appended, that St. Sylvester did not take either body intact to its own church, but that 'he with the greatest care and reverence weighed the bones, and placed one half in one church and the other half in the other'. The popularity of Durandus' book was very great, and the story as he told it came to be accepted at Rome without question in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, so that we

have it asserted, not only in the inscription already mentioned in connexion with the old altar *De Ossibus*, but also in another which Torrigio tells us was to be seen in his time above the altar of St. Paul's. 'Under this altar lie the glorious bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul, half of each of them, the other half being at St. Peter's, and their heads at St. John Lateran.'

It is not often that we can trace so easily and clearly the sources from which a legend such as this has had its rise. The whole fantastic story is based upon facts, but each fact has been distorted because imperfectly understood. It was known that the two Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul had for a time shared a common sepulchre, and that from thence their remains had been translated to the tombs around which the two churches were afterwards built. Next, there was the tradition, possibly true and well founded, that some of the relics of both Apostles had been united, and were preserved in each of the two great churches, and further that the altar *De Ossibus Apostolorum* in St. Peter's was in some way connected with this fact. Add to this the existence of a feast in honour of the 'Division of the Apostles', a title that could so easily be misunderstood, and we have all the elements that are necessary for the growth of our legend. The miraculous details of the voice from Heaven, and the rest, are due to the pious imagination of some medieval writer, and are quite on a par with much of the same kind with which any student of the apocryphal lives of the saints, and even of the apocryphal Gospels, will be very familiar. It is strange, however, that the longer bones should have been assigned to St. Paul and the shorter to St. Peter, for the general tradition of the appearance of the two Apostles is quite

the other way, it being usually supposed that St. Paul was of small stature, and that St. Peter surpassed him in height.

Looked at in this way the story is a very instructive one, and we learn from it much, not only of the method in which such traditions should be tested, but also how much incidental truth may sometimes be gleaned from even the most fantastic and improbable of legends. None of these legends were simply invented, except indeed such as occur in literature obviously unhistorical and tendencious like the Clementine Recognitions. On the contrary they grew up from mere misunderstandings and were originally intended to convey truth. Truth accordingly can often be discovered by their means when once the misunderstandings have been cleared away.

7

The question of the exact time at which St. Peter first came to Rome is one that is still keenly controverted. Into that controversy for the present we need not enter, for it is not essential to the special subject of this book. We will assume only what is willingly granted by almost every scholar of the present day, that St. Peter came to Rome at some time before his death, and was martyred there under Nero; and that St. Paul's trial as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles ended in acquittal, so that he left Rome, but that he too returned thither before the death of Nero and was martyred like his brother Apostle. Scripture is silent upon these matters. To set down what the traditions and monuments of Rome have to tell us is what we shall now attempt to do.

II

THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION

SUCH an event as the acquittal of St. Paul must for the moment have seemed to be a great triumph for the Christians. They had now a decision of the Supreme Court in their favour and for the moment they were safe. But if it was a triumph for Christianity it must also have very greatly increased the hatred of the Jews against Paul himself and the religion he professed. Christianity had grown up against their will under the shadow of the laws which were their own protection. For years they had continually struggled against this state of affairs; trying to bring home to the Roman mind the fact that this new religion was not a mere sub-division of Judaism, but was precisely that which the Roman mind most dreaded; a religion that was universal in its appeal, not merely national, and one that was invincibly hostile to the religion of the Empire. Now, by the decision of the Supreme Court, it would have been enacted that the protection the Jews had so unwillingly extended to these men who had been sheltering under these privileges must continue indefinitely. From such a state of affairs there was one possible escape open to them, and that was the initiation of a fresh policy by the Emperor himself, overruling the judgement that had been given in his name. To obtain this advantage might not be impossible if only a suitable occasion presented itself, for Judaism had now a most powerful friend at court in the person of Poppaea, a sympathizer at least if not an actual proselyte. Nor was it long before the opportunity

presented itself and was promptly utilized; none the less eagerly because in all probability it afforded to themselves the means of escape from a serious danger that was threatening them.[1]

Up to the year A.D. 64 there had been, so far as the Roman authorities were concerned, no sort of organized persecution of the Christian religion. Persecution there had been, but never in Rome and never originated by the Roman officials. It had been from the Jews themselves that it had always come. The martyrdom of St. Stephen, so far as it was authoritative at all, and the mission of Saul to Damascus with authority from the High Priest to arrest any Christians he could find, were acts of the Sanhedrin, which still retained considerable power in such matters. The martyrdom of St. James the Great and the imprisonment of St. Peter took place under the authority of Herod Agrippa, immediately after that prince had received the kingdom from Gaius; while the death of St. James the Just took place after the Jews had revolted. So again the various floggings and imprisonments to which St. Paul was subjected came, as he is careful to tell us, invariably from the Jews. 'Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned.' The beating with rods was, no doubt, a Roman punishment inflicted by Roman officials, but it was at the instigation of the Jews that it had taken place. The attitude of the higher Roman magistrates, on the other hand, had generally been one of toleration and protection, regarding the dispute

[1] St. Clement (i *Ad Cor.* v.), speaking of the deaths of St. Peter and St. Paul, gives them as instances of the evil effects of *jealousy*. It can only be of Jewish jealousy that he is speaking, for hostility between Jewish and Gentile Christians never went to such a length as this.

between Jew and Christian as merely an internal squabble with which Roman law was not concerned. But now, with all the unexpectedness of a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky, all this is reversed, the protection hitherto enjoyed by Christians is suddenly withdrawn, and the first and one of the sharpest of the persecutions of the Church is in full being.

On the 19th of July A.D. 64 a great fire broke out in Rome in the shops, full of inflammable wares, which surrounded the Circus Maximus. The wind was blowing strongly and the flames were carried along the valley towards the Forum and the Capitol. The fire soon gained such a hold that no preventive measures were of avail to stop it. The streets were narrow and winding, with houses that overhung[1] and so afforded the most suitable material possible for such a conflagration. Moreover, from the first, there were rumours that the fire was not due solely to accident. People were saying that it had seemed to spring up simultaneously in different places, and that men were found forbidding the flames to be extinguished, and openly hurling brands to increase the conflagration while they shouted that they were doing this under command from those in authority. After five days the destruction was arrested by the demolition of a large block of buildings at the foot of the Esquiline. Already rumours had spread that it was by Nero's orders that the fire had been lighted; and stories were beginning to be told of how he had dressed himself up in actor's clothes, and, lyre in hand, had chanted the story of the fire of Troy as he watched the blazing city. Popular indignation

[1] See the curious view of a Roman street of the time in the fresco in the 'House of Livia' on the Palatine.

began to grow against the Emperor, in spite of measures that were taken in his name to provide food and temporary lodgings on the Campus Martius for those who had been rendered homeless by the conflagration. This indignation was tremendously increased when the flames, which had been believed to be extinguished, burst out again on the Pincian Hill in the gardens of Tigellinus, Nero's most intimate friend. Of the fourteen regions of Rome, four alone remained uninjured; three were utterly levelled to the ground; while the remaining seven were filled with the wrecks and blackened walls of houses that had been destroyed.

For the first time Nero found himself face to face with popular fury. For a moment he was terrified, then with diabolical ingenuity he made his plans. The mob was convinced that the fire was the work of an incendiary, and was crying out for vengeance. He would turn their fury from himself against others who were defenceless; and while he thus saved himself from the consequences of his own act, he may also have been able to gratify the private hatreds of Poppaea, his Jewish wife, and other Jewish actors and dependants by whom he was surrounded. It was the Christians, he caused it to be asserted, who had set fire to Rome. They at least had no friends, for they shared with the Jews, with whom they were still generally confounded, the hatred in which these were held by the Roman populace; while by the Jews themselves they were detested and despised as being members of an heretical sect, the very object of which was to destroy the Jewish religion, and to cause to cease the observance of the Mosaic law.

The description of the event given by Tacitus leaves nothing to be desired in brevity or force.

'In order that he might free himself from the report,' he tells us, 'Nero caused to be accused, and inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon, a class of men who were hated for their abominable crimes, and who were called by the people Christians.[1] The Christ, from whom they took their name, was put to death during the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator, Pontius Pilate; and a most mischievous superstition, which had thus for the moment been checked, broke out anew, not only in Judea, but also in Rome, where everything that is shameful and hideous comes from every part of the world and finds a ready welcome. An arrest was first made of all who confessed, and then, upon the information thus obtained, an immense multitude were convicted, not so much of firing the city as of a general hatred of the human race.'[2]

It is not clear that any Christians confessed to having had any part in causing the fire; the crime that they confessed may have been simply that they were Christians. Nor, again, is there any reason to suppose that the Christians first arrested deliberately betrayed their brethren, even under torture. It is more probable, as Renan[3] has suggested, that papers were seized, and that in this way clues were obtained by means of which other arrests might be made, and thus the great numbers to which Christianity in Rome had attained became manifest. By this investigation on the part of the police, the real character of the new religion was soon discovered. It

[1] Tacitus, of course, was writing at a date when the idea that Christians were only a Jewish sect had long been exploded.

[2] Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 44.

[3] Renan, *L' Antéchrist*, p. 162. Cf. also Weizsäcker, *Jahrbuch für deutsch. Theol.* (1876), p. 269.

was clear to all that it was not, as it had been thought, merely a new sect of Judaism, but a religion that claimed universal obedience. It was in direct opposition, therefore, to the settled religious policy of the Roman Empire. That is the real meaning of Tacitus' phrase 'hatred of the human race'. It is a technical phrase, of which there are many other examples, and simply stands for 'hostility to the established laws and religion of the Roman Empire'. The Roman polity, by its citizens, was deemed co-terminous with civilization itself.

There is no absolute proof that any person, Christian, Jew, or pagan, was actually condemned upon the charge of incendiarism, though it is true that the punishment inflicted was that appointed for arson.[1] The official verdict upon the origin of the fire was that it was due to chance. The private conviction of men of almost every class in Rome was that it was due to the Emperor himself. It was necessary to divert public attention. Nero therefore determined at once to gratify his own lust for blood and to make a bid for the recovery of the favour of the people by organizing games on a scale hitherto unknown. In them the Christians should be put to death in various methods of fantastic cruelty. In this way it was hoped to divert the minds of the spectators from any further speculations as to the complicity of the Emperor in bringing about the recent conflagration.

For these games it was necessary to find a fitting scene. The Colosseum, of course, was not yet built, and the Circus Maximus, which would have been the spot naturally selected, had utterly perished in the fire.

[1] See *Digest*, xlviii. 19. 28. 12.

The same was probably also the case with the Flaminian Circus, situated where now is the Piazza Navona. There remained the great Circus that Caligula had erected on the Vatican, surrounded by parks and gardens which were the private property of the Emperor. In this place, accordingly, the games were organized, and Nero threw open his gardens for the occasion to the whole of Rome. Tacitus describes the scene in only a few words, but they are enough to tell us at least the outlines of the entertainment that was provided.[1] It began doubtless with a long procession of the condemned, who filed round the circus. This was only to whet the appetite of the spectators for what was coming. There succeeded the *Venatio*, ordinarily the concluding scene, but on this occasion put at the beginning on account of the even more exciting episodes that were to follow. Numbers of unhappy Christians, men and women, dressed in the skins of wild animals, were turned into the arena, and savage dogs were let loose to hunt down and devour this defenceless quarry. When the spectators were tired of this frightful scene, crosses were brought in and other poor wretches were fastened to them, to fall a helpless prey to wild beasts which were then let loose, having been deliberately deprived of food for some time beforehand that they might not fail to do their part with due eagerness.

These, however, were mere ordinary scenes at the amphitheatres of the day, but the peculiar bent of Nero's mind towards everything connected with the stage, seems to have suggested a novel diversion.[2] He would have a series of tableaux, in which the tortures

[1] *Annals*, xv. 44.

[2] Allard, *Hist. des Persécutions*, i. 50.

and deaths recorded in mythology and in history should be enacted in reality with living victims. The fashion thus initiated seems to have become common at a later date, and we read in various authors, how, to please the mob, Ixion was really fastened upon the wheel;[1] Icarus made to fly and killed in his fall;[2] Hercules really burnt;[3] the arm of Mucius Scaevola really consumed;[4] Orpheus[5] and Daedalus really torn in pieces. A chance expression in the Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians, alluding to the horrors of this persecution, seems to imply that some such scenes as these were included in the spectacles of the day, and that Christian maidens were among the unhappy actors. He cites, among those who on this fearful day feeble as they were in body yet obtained eternal reward, some whom he designates as 'Danaids and Dirces'; and the most probable interpretation of his words would seem to be that which supposes that among these tableaux was one in which fifty virgins were made to enact the parts of the daughters of Danaus, outraged may be by men who represented the sons of Aegyptus, and finally put to death by one who enacted the part of Lynceus.[6] Another similar scene may perhaps have been suggested by the celebrated group which is now in the Museum of Naples, and which had been brought to Rome in the time of Augustus by Asinius Pollio. This group represents the sons of Antiope fixing Dirce to the horns of a bull, in vengeance for her attempts to slay their mother. Such a death, which was certainly afterwards inflicted upon

[1] Tertullian, *De Pud.* 22.
[2] Suetonius, *Nero*, 12.
[3] Tertullian, *Apol.* 15.
[4] Martial, *Epigr.* viii. 30.
[5] Tertullian, *De Spect.* xxi.
[6] Clement, *Ad Cor.* vi.

St. Blandina, St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas, and many others, may very probably have been assigned to a number of Christian virgins on this day.

The day drew to an end, and night approached. As the shades fell a new and horrible illumination was provided. All about the gardens crosses and stakes had been set up, and on these there had been fixed or impaled,[1] in accordance with the cruel custom in the case of incendiaries, numbers of Christians, clad in garments soaked with tar and turpentine and other inflammable materials. All the day long they had been forced to look on at the tortures of their fellow believers, or at least to listen to their cries and to the brutal applause of the mob: now that night has come they in their turn must minister to the amusement of Rome: their garments are set on fire, and up and down these avenues of living torches there passed chariots and racers. Nero himself did not disdain, sometimes to contend for a prize, sometimes, in the dress of a driver, to mingle with the crowds of onlookers. Everywhere, no doubt, he was applauded; a Roman crowd dared not do otherwise even if it desired; and yet, as Tacitus tells us, there were many who could not repress a feeling of compassion for so many sufferers, who, as they felt, were being sacrificed not so much for the public good as to glut the cruelty of the Emperor. The way in which these sufferers met their deaths made its impression. They did not blaspheme or complain, not a groan was to be heard; on the contrary they went to their terrible deaths with cheerful faces and a smile upon their lips. The memory of it was still with

[1] Cf. Juvenal, 155–7, iii. 233. Seneca, *De ira*, iii. 3, and *Ep.* 14, 5. Martial, *Epigr.* iv, lxxxvii. 7; x, xxv. 5.

Seneca when, a year or two later, he wrote to Lucilius to bid him bear up bravely under sickness and pain. 'What are your sufferings', he asks, 'compared with the flame and the rack? And yet, in the midst of sufferings like that, I have seen men not only not groan, that is little: not only not complain, that is little: not only not answer back, that too is little; but I have seen them smile, and smile with a good heart.'[1] It is impossible to avoid connecting such words with the Christian martyrs. No common malefactor could meet death like that; it needs the faith of a Christian who knows that through such suffering lies his path to glory and to God.

The horrible scene drew to a close at last; the living torches, slowly burning, flickered and went out, leaving but a heap of ashes and half-burnt flesh behind them; the crowds of sight-seers wended their way back to the city streets; and silence fell again on the gardens of Nero. Then there crept out through the darkness, within the circus and along the paths of the gardens, a fresh crowd; men and women, maidens, and even little children, taking their lives in their hands, every one of them, as they went; for detection meant a cruel death on the morrow; eager to save what they could of the relics of the martyrs: bones that had been gnawed by dogs and wild beasts, ashes and half-burnt flesh, and other sad remains, all of them precious indeed in the sight of their brethren who are left, relics that must not be lost, but will henceforth be treasured as glorious jewels, fitting contents for the altar tombs on which the Holy Sacrifice is to be offered.[2] Close by the Circus,

[1] Seneca, *Ep.* 78.

[2] For the zeal of the early Christians in recovering such relics see, e.g., the Acts of St. Polycarp. St. Chrysostom calls it 'a hunting'.

on the other side of the Via Cornelia, in the midst of many pagan tombs, some Christians already possessed a tiny plot of ground available for purposes of burial. There on the morrow, no man hindering, since funeral ceremonies in Roman eyes were always sacrosanct, all the remains that could be collected were deposited in one great chest of stone, for it was out of the question to keep them separate. It was the beginning of the Vatican Cemetery, hereafter to become so famous, and here by their side, only a short time after, the body of St. Peter was in its turn laid to rest. More than 1,600 years afterwards, when the excavations were being made under Urban VIII for the foundations of the great bronze baldacchino over the altar tomb of St. Peter himself, the sad relics of this first great persecution were brought to light. 'We found', wrote Ubaldi, who was actually present when the discovery was made, 'a large coffin made of great slabs of marble.' Within there were only 'ashes with many bones, all adhering together and half burned'. 'We therefore revered these holy bones as being those of the first fruits of our martyrs and, having put back the coffin, allowed it to remain in its former place.'[1] There these relics still remain, close by the foundation of the right-hand pillar of the baldacchino as one comes up the church, and there now rises above them the glorious dome of the first church of Christendom.

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Tacitus in connecting the origin of the persecution of the Christians with the great fire. But the attempt to prove their guilt in this matter seems to have broken down. In the curious historical parallel of the attempt to

[1] Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 714; Barnes, A. S., *St. Peter in Rome*, p. 322 seq.

throw the blame of the Great Fire of London upon the Catholics, the accusation, though known to be false, was crystallized in stone by the inscription on the monument which remained almost into living memory. We all of us remember Pope's biting lines:

> Where London's column, pointing to the skies,
> Like some tall bully, lifts it head—and lies.

Pagan Rome in 64 had a keener sense of justice than Protestant London in 1666. No later writer than Tacitus mentions the fire in his account of the origin of persecution. No doubt a few hotheads, denouncing the wickedness of Rome in apocalyptic language, and asserting that the Fire was the judgement of God, may have suffered for their actions. But it was not as incendiarists that Christians were persecuted for so many years, but as political offenders. What is always brought out by the later writers and especially by Tertullian and the Christian Apologists of the next two centuries is that the power which originated that long persecution was that of the Emperor and that Nero himself it was that first brought it into being.

III

THE APOSTLES IN HIDING

THESE events of A.D. 64 had made a dramatic change in the legal position of Christians throughout the Empire. In June 64, a month before the outbreak of the great fire, their position had been one of considerable security, at least for the moment. 'He that hindered' had indeed been taken away; Claudius was dead and Antichrist in the person of Nero was already in supreme power. But as yet there had been no overt move against Christianity. On the contrary, the acquittal of St. Paul by the Emperor's own court and the consequent formal decision that to preach the Christian religion was not an offence against Roman law would have seemed to have put Christians in a position of considerable strength. Then the storm had burst suddenly. The Emperor himself had been the moving cause of all the terrible events that followed. When the typhoon had passed and men could survey the wreckage, they could realize how much had been lost. It may well have been true, as Tacitus says, that after the scenes of the Vatican a certain revulsion of feeling took place among the Roman populace, and men began to pity the victims as having been sacrificed 'not so much for the public good as to glut the cruelty of a single man'. But, although for the rest of Nero's reign active persecution may have somewhat diminished, especially when the Emperor himself left Rome on his tour to Greece, still the legal position of the Christians remained hopeless. They were outlaws, liable to the death penalty at any moment simply on

account of their religious belief. Even if actual executions were not numerous there were many other penalties which could be inflicted. The Golden House of Nero was being erected, and criminals from all parts of the Empire were drafted in for forced labour. Among them, no doubt, there will have been many Christians. Not until the death of Nero in 68 did there come any real alleviation of their troubles, and then it was only in the form of a temporary non-enforcement of the law. 'When everything else of Nero's was repealed', complains Tertullian, 'the policy against Christianity lasted on.'[1] Whether or not that policy was being enforced with full severity, in any particular place, or at any particular time, the fact remained that everywhere and always, throughout the whole extent of the Roman Empire, from the time of Nero onwards, Christianity was a proscribed religion, and Christians, as such, were practically outlaws at the mercy of their enemies.

Although there is no decisive evidence on the matter we may accept the general tradition of the Church that at the time of the outbreak of the persecution St. Peter was living in the house of Pudens, on the Viminal, and governing the Church from thence. If St. Paul, even as a prisoner, could preach freely to all who came to him, no man forbidding him, much more could St. Peter, as a free man under the protection of a great noble, carry on his evangelistic work with absolute freedom. Christianity, however unpopular its adherents might be, still enjoyed the protection of the law. But when once the storm had broken and this

[1] *Ad Nat.* i. 7: 'Et tamen permansit, erasis omnibus, hoc solum institutum Neronianum'.

protection was withdrawn, it cannot have been possible for St. Peter, even though he had escaped the first and fiercest onslaught, to remain living openly in the middle of the city. For the remainder of his life, so well known a man, doubtless sought for by the police as the leader of the proscribed religion, must have retired to some hidden spot, as was the case also with so many of his successors, and from thence have carried on the government of the Church as best he could in the hope that the storm might pass and peace be once more granted to Christianity. Where this spot was situated we shall hope to be able to indicate later on. For the present it must suffice that we think of St. Peter as living in concealment, the police being unaware whether or not he had left the city. St. Paul, on the other hand, we may suppose, had not yet returned. If tradition may be trusted he was still in Spain, whence he apparently returned eastward, as to the point of danger, as soon as the news of the changed state of affairs reached him in that distant land.

I

The obscurity of the period is lighted up for us by a single document, the first Epistle of St. Peter. This Epistle, from internal evidence, seems almost certainly to belong to the moment, immediately after the Vatican horrors, when Christianity was for the first time brought definitely into conflict with the law, and when the persecution thus begun in Rome seemed bound inevitably to take its logical course and spread over the entire Roman world. Whether it actually did so spread, or whether it had not time to do so before it was stopped for a while by the death of Nero, is not

clear, and is not for our present purpose of great importance. Since magistrates in the provinces were certain to follow the lead given them in the capital by the Emperor in person, it would in any case have seemed to St. Peter inevitable that persecution must spread, and that rapidly. This fact alone is amply sufficient to explain to us why he, in the absence of St. Paul, should have thought it wise to send to the Pauline churches of Asia a letter of encouragement and advice to aid them in the great trials which he foresaw were bound to come upon them. It suggests also that St. Paul was at this time in Spain, having gone thither rather than to Asia Minor on his release. For if he had actually been in Asia at this time it is hard to see why St. Peter rather than St. Paul should have written. To wait for St. Paul's return, so that he might himself address his own converts might well have been to leave the matter too late, and to lose the opportunity that the projected journey of Silvanus to Pontus offered for the safe conveyance of such a message.

It has often been suggested that the strong words used in this Epistle on the duty of civil obedience, and especially on the duty of obedience to the supreme power of the Emperor (ii. 13, 17) would be scarcely possible at such a moment, when by the personal action of that Emperor himself Christianity had just been outlawed, and that such teaching fits better with the idea that the Epistle was written a few years earlier, immediately after the acquittal of St. Paul, when the power of the Roman law was still protecting the new religion. But, on that hypothesis, one can see no motive for the Epistle having been written at all. It would have been for St. Paul at that time to

write to his own converts, not for St. Peter, who, as far as we really know, may never have visited those regions. Moreover the whole Epistle breathes the full atmosphere of persecution. Except the Apocalypse and possibly Hebrews there is no book of the New Testament which is more obviously a persecution document. But until the action of Nero in 64, there was no organized persecution throughout the Empire which could at all account for the language which is here employed. There would be no meaning in such words as 'the fiery trial among you which is coming upon you to test you' (iv. 12) before Nero's action, while, on the other hand, these words are most fitting and eloquent if we can think of them as being written on the very morrow of the fires of the Vatican and in reference to the living torches whose burning had thrown so terrible a light on the hideous scene. The exhortations to patience and to the duty of civil obedience, even under the stress of cruel persecution, are, after all, only echoes of our Lord's own words in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you' (Matt. v. 43). It is far easier to account for words of gentleness coming from an Apostle in time of persecution than it would be to account for references to present and expected persecution at a time when active persecution had not yet begun.

It is only natural that the two Epistles of St. Paul which have most clearly influenced this Epistle of St. Peter should be precisely the two which we should *a priori* have expected: namely, the Epistle to the Romans; sent, as may have been the case, to St.

Peter himself, and written quite possibly at his personal request; and the Epistle to the Ephesians, which was probably written and sent from Rome during the time of St. Paul's first imprisonment. The Epistle of St. Peter shows, in the words of Dr. Moffatt, 'an attitude influenced but essentially uncontrolled by the special ideas of Paul'.[1] That this should be so is very natural if we consider that St. Paul had been in Rome for at least two years during the time of his imprisonment and that for those two years at any rate the intercourse between the two Apostles must have been constant and continuous.

We may have some confidence therefore in dating the Epistle at the end of A.D. 64, when the first extreme violence of the storm was over, and the persecution was passing into its second phase of continuous outlawry of Christianity. We learn from it that Silvanus (who is very possibly the same as the Silas who was so often the companion of St. Paul in the Acts), and also St. Mark were both with St. Peter in Rome. The Epistle is signed at the beginning; that was necessary in order that it might carry due authority. But it is dated not from Rome but from Babylon, and salutations are sent from the Babylonish Church, 'the elect of Babylon'.[2] That alone is sufficient to date the Epistle as a persecution document. Neither history nor tradition afford the slightest support for the literal interpretation of the phrase, while on the other hand the Apocalypse of St. John and the *Sibylline Oracles*,[3] a document partly Jewish and partly Christian which in this portion is

[1] Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 330.

[2] 1 Pet. v. 18.

[3] *Sibylline Oracles*, v. 143. Nero's flight from Rome is spoken of as φεύξεται ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος. Zahn dates this portion as A.D. 71–4.

probably almost exactly contemporary, show plainly enough that the name of Babylon was in common use both among Jews and Christians to denote Rome as the great oppressor. Not otherwise did English Catholics under the penal laws hide the dangerous name of Rome under the disguise of 'Hilltown' in correspondence that ran some risk of being intercepted. There could be no object in making it clear to any Roman official into whose hands the letter might possibly fall through some mischance, that St. Peter, the man for whom the Roman police were searching, was actually to be found in the city of Rome. At the same time the name of Babylon would be perfectly clear to any Christian reader of that date.

The objection to the authenticity of the Epistle drawn from the excellence of the Greek style in which it is written does not seem to have much force. How can we tell what sort of Greek St. Peter was able to write after many years' daily use of the language? Papias, it is urged, says that Mark was his interpreter. But that is again much too vague a statement to serve as a firm foundation for any deduction. It may mean only that St. Mark interpreted St. Peter's sermons by connecting them in his Gospel into a single narrative. Or, again, it may mean that St. Mark acted as interpreter for the benefit of those who only spoke Latin. Rome was no doubt to a great extent bilingual in the first century, and most of the Jews of the dispersion must have understood and spoken Greek. But even so there must have been many, both in Cornelius' band at Caesarea and in Rome itself, who had no language but their native Latin, and St. Mark's tendency to Latinisms in his Gospel is clear evidence that this was

so. In any case the phrase 'I have written unto you by Silvanus' with which the Epistle ends may well cover actual assistance in composition as well as the duty of conveying the letter to its destination, and Mark himself was also there (v. 14), and his services would be available for the same purpose.

2

There is no evidence in existence to tell us when it was that St. Paul returned to Rome. Still, the tradition of the Church is clear that he did go to Spain, and the specific statement of St. Clement of Rome, whose evidence is that of a contemporary, that he 'was a herald both in East and West' and that 'after he had reached the limit of the West he gave his testimony before the rulers',[1] cannot be set aside. Rome, for a Roman, was not 'the limit of the West'. It is singular that no local tradition remains in Spain to tell us of his visit, and this seems to show that his stay there must have been a short one. No doubt, too, the long Moorish occupation may have caused traditions to be lost.

St. Paul left Rome, at latest, early in 62. Between that date and his martyrdom in June 67 we have to find room for this visit to Spain, and also for the various allusions in 2 Timothy which suggest a final journey to his former mission field in Asia. Apparently he had but recently come from Asia when he wrote, probably in the autumn of 66, from his prison in Rome, begging Timothy to come to Rome himself before winter set in.

It will best satisfy all these requirements if we imagine St. Paul to have gone to Spain immediately

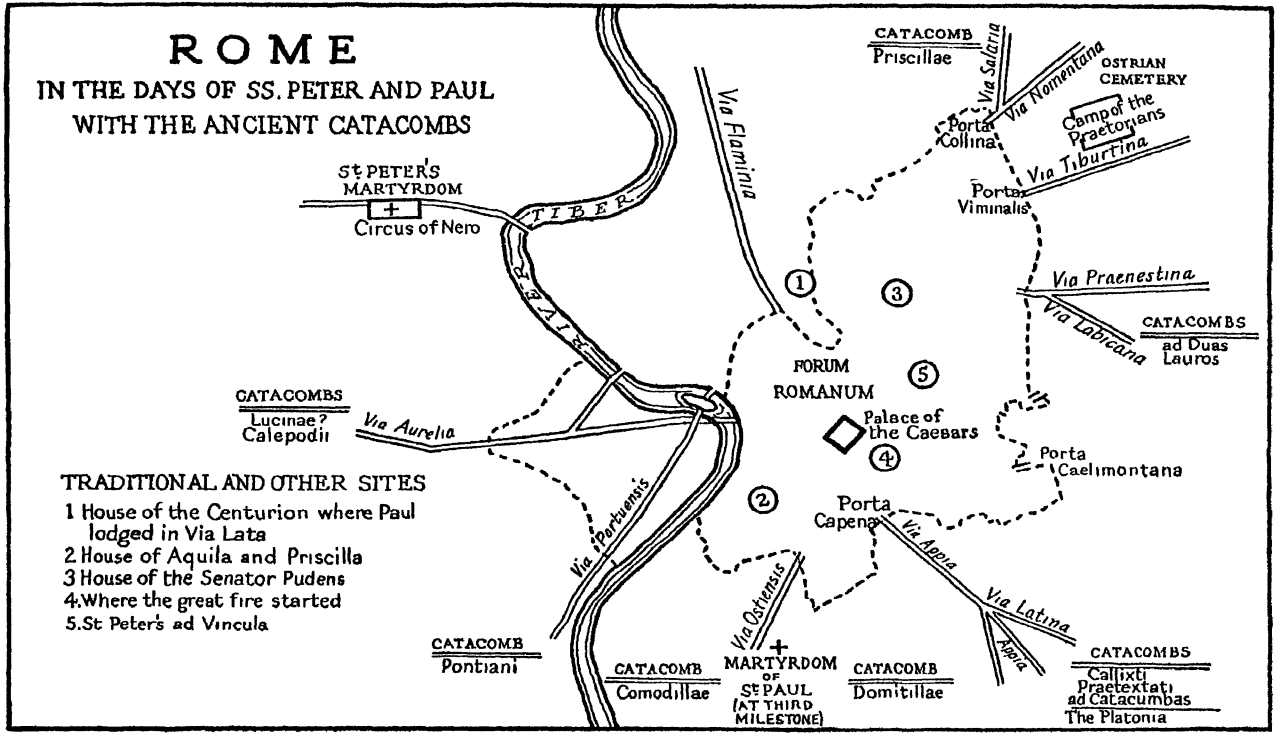
[1] i *Clem.* v.

on his release in 62, and to have remained there until the news of the changed situation in Rome reached him in the autumn of 64. St. Peter meanwhile, we may suppose, realizing that the persecution must spread to Asia very soon, and that St. Paul could not write himself on account of his absence in Spain, sent Silvanus thither with an Epistle of his own, written to encourage the Christians there under the stress of the coming difficulties. St. Paul, as soon as the news reached him in Spain, would probably have determined to go to Asia in person for the same reason. He would have avoided Rome in that case and have gone perhaps to Corinth, wintering that year, 64–5, at Nicopolis. From thence we may imagine him going in the spring of 65 to Crete and, leaving Titus there in charge, passing on himself to Troas, Ephesus, Miletus. In Asia, however, he seems not to have been well received, for he writes a complaint to Timothy that 'all Asia had turned away from him' (2 Tim. i. 15). Possibly he was regarded as being in some degree responsible for having brought about the persecution from which they were already beginning to suffer. It may have been for this reason that he thought it better to go on to Rome and join St. Peter there in his retirement. If he arrived there in the summer of 66, and was arrested soon after, that would satisfy all the details of the chronology as far as we can reconstitute it from the very scanty details available. But in any case no certainty of any kind can be reached, and we are reduced to guess-work to a great extent.

Once in the capital St. Paul's life would necessarily have been in grave danger, for he must have been well known to a very great number of people in Rome who

were connected with the Government; especially to the officers of the Praetorian Guard and to the soldiers, to so many of whom he had been chained during the years of his imprisonment. Like St. Peter, therefore, he must have lived in hiding, and not have ventured openly into the city. Possibly he joined St. Peter in the place of his concealment outside the city. Of this there seems to be an indication in the story given in the apocryphal 'Acts', printed by Lipsius both in Greek and Latin under the title of *Passionis Pauli Fragmentum.* In this account, which has no great historic value of its own, but which, like historical romances of our own day, is written round the places traditionally connected with the Apostles, it is said that St. Paul '*conduxit sibi extra urbem horreum*', 'hired for himself a grange or country house outside the city', where he could see his disciples.[1] This may very well be founded on a genuine tradition, and later on we shall endeavour to throw some light on the question where this refuge outside the city was actually situated. For the present we must be content to picture the two Apostles for the remainder of their lives in Rome, living in concealment and seeing their disciples by stealth. The stories of English priests in England under the penal laws will enable us to form a vivid idea of what that life involved and of the dangers by which it was attended. That St. Peter should have been able to avoid arrest by the police for so long a time as two or possibly three years need not surprise us when we consider how, for instance, Fr. John Gerard S.J. was able to continue his missionary work in England, in spite of the keenest possible pursuit by Elizabeth's

[1] Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, pp. 104, 105.


ROME
IN THE DAYS OF SS. PETER AND PAUL
WITH THE ANCIENT CATACOMBS
St PETER'S MARTYRDOM
Circus of Nero
TIBER
Via Flaminia
CATACOMB Priscillae
Via Salaria
Via Nomentana
OSTRIAN CEMETERY
Camp of the Praetorians
Porta Collina
Via Tiburtina
Porta Viminalis
Via Praenestina
Via Labicana
CATACOMBS ad Duas Lauros
FORUM ROMANUM
Palace of the Caesars
Porta Caelimontana
Porta Capena
Via Appia
Via Latina
Appia
CATACOMBS Callixti Praetextati ad Catacumbas The Platonia
CATACOMB Domitillae
MARTYRDOM OF St PAUL (AT THIRD MILESTONE)
Via Ostiensis
CATACOMB Comodillae
CATACOMB Pontiani
Via Portuensis
CATACOMBS Lucinae? Calepodii
Via Aurelia
TRADITIONAL AND OTHER SITES
1 House of the Centurion where Paul lodged in Via Lata
2 House of Aquila and Priscilla
3 House of the Senator Pudens
4 Where the great fire started
5 St Peter's ad Vincula

Government, for no less a period than eighteen years before he was arrested. It may well have been that the Roman authorities in these years, after the dying down of the first blaze of persecution, were not making a very strenuous search for the Christian leaders.

Whenever he may have reached Rome, by the autumn of 66 at latest St. Paul had been arrested. This time, he had no hope of escaping with his life. But he was not expecting any immediate trial or condemnation, for he writes to Timothy imploring him to come to Rome 'before winter'. Possibly he had once more pleaded his Roman citizenship and in consequence his case may have been put off until the return of the Emperor. For Nero had started for Greece towards the end of 66 and would be now absent from Rome. If that was so, when it had become clear that the Emperor intended to remain away for some time (he did not return until 68), it may have been resolved to proceed with the trial in spite of Nero's absence. It may indeed have been the later arrest of St. Peter, and the fact that they now had both the leaders in their hands, that led the authorities to proceed to a joint trial, and to put an end, as they might have thought, to the whole sect, by the simultaneous execution of both its chiefs.

3

Among the many traditions of St. Peter's life in Rome which are contained in the various apocryphal Acts which were later put forth under his name, there is one in particular which stands out as very beautiful in itself, and as having, not improbably, a real historical foundation. This is the well-known story which

attaches itself to the little oratory known as the *Quo Vadis?* on the Via Appia. The story is certainly ancient and was known to Origen in the third and to St. Ambrose in the fourth century and was accepted by them as true.[1] It tells how, when the persecution was raging and special search for St. Peter was known to have been set on foot by the police, the faithful came to him and begged him to save himself by flight.

'"O truest of Fathers, remember the words you said so often, that you were willing to lay down your life for our safety; may we not ask you for the sake of our salvation to be willing to bear yet for a little longer the burden of life?" So he bade them farewell and blessed the brethren, and started off alone to seek safety without the walls. And when he had scarcely passed the city gate he saw Christ coming to him, and he fell down and worshipped Him, and said to Him, "Lord, whither goest Thou?", and Christ said to him, "I come to Rome to be crucified once more". And Peter said to Him, "Lord, wilt Thou be crucified afresh?", and the Lord said to him, "Yea, I shall be crucified afresh". And Peter said "I will turn back and follow Thee". And when he had so spoken the Lord ascended into heaven. And Peter followed Him with longing eyes and sweet tears, and then, when he had come to himself, he understood that it was spoken of his own passion, and that the Lord was to suffer afresh in his person, for so he does suffer in all the chosen, by the compassion of His mercy and the power of His Glory. And Peter turned back, and went into the city with joy, glorifying God and telling the brethren how Christ had met him and had declared to him how that He was in him about to be crucified again.'[2]

It is worth noting how much more beautiful the story is in this form—the invariable form of all the

[1] St. Ambrose, *Sermons*, 68; cf. also *Contra Auxentium*, c. 13, and Origen, *In Joann.*, xx. 32.

[2] *Martyrium Beati Petri*, ed. Lipsius, pp. 8, 9.

early writers—than in that in which it is commonly told in modern times. There is no trace of cowardice in St. Peter's flight. He goes back, although longing for the martyrdom he has always known from our Lord's prophecy[1] was to be his privilege, in the spirit shown later by St. Martin of Tours: 'Lord, if I am still needed by this thy people, I do not refuse the labour. Thy will be done.'[2] Nor is it as a reproach that our Lord comes back to earth, in order to take the place of one who has deserted his post of danger, but rather as a special honour to one who was His *alter ego* and His representative on earth; to tell him that the time had come at last for the fulfilment of a prophecy made so long ago, and that as he had followed his Master in his life and work, so also was it to be his privilege to follow Him in his death, and to join Him in His glory. It was not in the stead of St. Peter but in his person, that the Lord, who now was beyond the reach of suffering, was yet about to suffer and to die afresh. It is surely not fanciful to see in the words of St. Peter in his Second Epistle, which must have been written precisely at this time, just before his arrest, a reference to this vision, foretelling to him his speedy death. 'For I know that the laying aside of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also has signified to me.'

There is no reason to suppose that it was immediately followed by his arrest. The allusion in the Epistle would imply that it was not, for St. Peter was apparently still at liberty when that was written. But the story connects itself very definitely with the period of waiting in concealment and in this connexion it is of

[1] St. John xxi. 18. [2] Antiphon in Roman Breviary for St. Martin's Day.

special interest to note that it is placed by tradition upon the Appian Way, for it is precisely in that locality that we find such indications as have come down to us of the spot where the Apostles concealed themselves during this period of persecution.

We will now, therefore, proceed to consider the question whether the exact spot can or cannot still be located with any serious probability.

4

When the pilgrims of the seventh century made their journey round the holy places of Rome, visiting one after another the various spots connected with the martyrs, some of them copied down inscriptions which had been set up by St. Damasus and others to commemorate the saint or the event connected with the spot. To them we are indebted for the preservation of the text of many of these inscriptions which would otherwise have perished, since the marbles on which they were written have disappeared in the course of the centuries, many having been destroyed by the Saracens at the time of the invasion of Rome in 846.

One such inscription was copied in this way somewhere in the group of buildings on the Appian Way which consists of the Church of San Sebastiano (then known as the Basilica Apostolorum), the Platonia, and another smaller building, recently discovered, called now the *Domus Petri* because those two words were scratched on its wall by some devout visitor, apparently at some time in the fourth or fifth century. This inscription ran as follows:

HIC HABITASSE PRIVS SANCTOS COGNOSCERE DEBES
NOMINA QVISQVE PETRI PARITER PAULIQVE REQVIRIS.

For the moment we need not trouble ourselves with the remaining lines, though we must return to them later on. These two lines, then, say, 'Here it was you should know that those Saints once dwelt, You who are seeking the names of Peter and also of Paul'. All that we know for certain about this inscription is that it was to be seen, in the seventh century, somewhere in this group of buildings on the Appian Way, and that it had been placed there by St. Damasus at the end of the fourth century. There is an alternative reading HABITARE in some copies, but this seems inconsistent with PRIVS.

On account of an entry in the life of St. Damasus in the *Liber Pontificalis* which states that the Pope 'adorned the *Platonia* where the sacred bodies lay with verses', it has been universally taken for granted that these were the verses in question, and, consequently, that they had been placed in the Platonia itself. And since the Platonia, of which we shall have much more to say later, was held, on the faith of an extremely strong tradition, to have been the place where the bodies of the two saints lay side by side at some time during the ages of persecution, it has also been almost universally taken for granted that the word *habitasse*, 'dwelt', must here be read in the unusual and poetical sense of 'lay in death in the tomb'. There has been a prodigious amount of controversial writing on the subject, but always this point has been taken as more or less fundamental and the verses have always been supposed to have been placed in the Platonia, a very ancient crypt which adjoins the Church of San Sebastiano on the Appian Way.

Some years ago, in 1893, most careful and searching excavations were made at the Platonia. Some very

interesting discoveries were made with which we shall deal in another chapter. One was that of a long inscription very much in the style of St. Damasus, but which was much damaged and could not be read in its entirety. It was painted round the building, not, like the rest of St. Damasus' inscriptions, cut into a marble tablet. Obviously this opened up the question whether this unique painted inscription may be the one which Damasus is recorded to have placed in the Platonia. However, the inscription had little if anything to do with the Apostles, but recorded the burial in that spot of a certain Quirinus, a notable martyr whose relics had been brought to Rome. Hence, since the record in the *Liber Pontificalis* said that Damasus 'had adorned with verses the *Platonia* where the sacred bodies lay', it was generally still held that it was not these, but rather those beginning *Hic habitasse* which were meant, and it was still generally accepted that these lines must refer to some translation to this spot of the relics of the Apostles, and that *habitasse* must be given its sepulchral interpretation. With this idea still in my mind, though I had already come to realize the tremendous difficulties which stood in the way of accepting any such story of a translation of relics, I asked permission, in the spring of 1930, to make a small additional excavation in the Platonia so as to settle the question in my own mind whether the inscription could possibly ever have been there. The results of that excavation being mainly negative, I was forced to the final conclusion that we must look elsewhere for the original location of the tablet of St. Damasus, for inside the Platonia no such tablet can ever have been. That to my mind was now absolutely clear.

It was while I was occupied with this problem, and was wondering where next one should try to search, that I chanced to take a party of friends to visit the little Museum in the Ambulacrum at San Sebastiano, then just newly arranged. There, laid out in a glass case, I found a number of fragments which I had never seen before of what had evidently once been a very fine Damasine inscription. The beautiful Philocalian lettering in red was quite unmistakable. Surely, I said to myself, these must certainly be the fragments of the lost inscription. It is hardly conceivable that St. Damasus can have written three[1] separate poems to be set up in this group of buildings. So I made a careful examination of the fragments to see whether any of them could be fitted together so as to give a sufficient clue to their origin.

Where so few fragments remain, and these so undistinctive, there must always be some uncertainty in recovering their place in any inscription. The difficulty is increased in a Philocalian inscription, because of the many liberties which the engraver allowed himself. The result is always admirably symmetrical, but the letters are by no means of uniform width. One cannot simply count the letters and say that in any line the twentieth letter, for instance, will be exactly under the twentieth letter in the line above. It may be a whole letter out; occasionally, at the end of a line, even two; and this where no special liberty has been taken. But, to make his lines balance, the engraver would sometimes resort to strange expedients. The sudden use of a letter much smaller than the rest is

[1] Or rather four, for there is another, still intact, to St. Eutychius, in the basilica itself.

PHOTOGRAPH OF SOME OF THE FRAGMENTS OF THE INSCRIPTION

quite common, and this small letter will sometimes be placed inside a D or a C. So again the horizontal strokes of an E may spring from the last down-stroke of a preceding M, or from the vertical stroke of a T, the upper stroke of the T in that case being shown above the general level of the line. Sometimes words are shortened, the suffix *que* being often shown simply as Q. There are no spaces between the words.[1]

With these introductory remarks we may pass at once to the consideration of our problem and try to decide whether these fragments can really be part of the inscription in which we are interested. It may shorten our task of investigation if we remember that there is a probability that, if they form part of this inscription at all, it will be to the first three lines that they belong. My reason for thinking this is that there still survives, in a chapel on the staircase leading to the Platonia, a copy of these verses, in Gothic lettering of the ninth century; but a copy not of the whole poem, only of the first three lines, and not all even of these. The copy runs thus:

+HIC · HĀITARE · PRI᾽ · SCTOS · COGNOSCERE
DEBES+NOIA℞ᴱQᵉ · PETRI · PAVLI · PARITERQ
REQRIS+DISCIPLOS ORIĒS MISIT QD SPŌTE[2]

Now there could be no object in stopping precisely at that point. It can only mean that the rest was already lost and the memory of only those three lines survived. Indeed it looks as if these were no longer intact, and that only the letters PA survived in that part of the

[1] The photograph of a Damasine inscription which makes Plate 3556 in Cabrol's *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie*, s.v. 'Damase', gives many examples of these variations.

[2] A photographic reproduction of this copy of the inscription will be found in de Rossi's *Inscriptiones Christianae*, ii. 299.

second line, and that this has led to the copy having PAVLI PARITERQVE instead of PARITER PAVLIQVE. Probably the original tablet was smashed up when the Saracens held the church and its surroundings in 846. It was then determined perhaps to preserve the original inscription so far as it survived or could be restored by memory. Anyhow, since this portion seems to have survived the longest it will be worth our while to confine our attention at first to these three lines.

Certainly there is no excess of material in the way of lettering for us to deal with, which accounts for the fact that no attempt has hitherto been made to identify the fragments. Still, scanty though the material is, there remains, I venture to think, enough to prove our point. But before we begin I would once more emphasize the point of the strong antecedent probability that these fragments must belong to this inscription—since otherwise one must postulate yet another and totally unknown Damasine inscription in this one group of buildings.

On examining the fragments and their lettering it becomes clear at once that it is upon one single group of five, which can be fitted together, that our hopes of any certainty of identification must depend. This group at once shows certain unexpected peculiarities. The lettering upon it is of three different sizes. At the top we have apparently the feet of an A of small size. In the next line we have an S followed by an E and itself preceded by an A of which only one foot remains. In the third line we have an E of larger size, followed apparently by another letter of the same size which may have been a P, for there seems to be a trace in the centre of the down stroke. Below that again in the

fourth line is an O of the same size as the letter in the second line, and below that again what is apparently the top of an M. Restoring the letters of which only parts remain we have

A
ASE
EP
O
M

The ASE suggests the end of *habitasse*, and explains at the same time the double reading of *habitasse* and *habitare*. The copyists saw that there was a mistake, and corrected it each in his own way.

If this be accepted then a new fact becomes manifest. The two feet of the A in the line above form no part of the inscription as we know it, but must belong to a heading of some sort, and this at once explains its smaller size. Headings are rare in Damasine inscriptions but not unknown. In this case, since it was not thought worth copying it was probably merely formal in character.

The second line of the inscription, third on the stone, allowing for this heading, was composed of letters larger than the rest. This would seem to have been done because of the names PETRI and PAVLI which occur in it. It is a feature which, as far as I know, has no parallel in Damasine inscriptions.

This EP seems clearly to belong to QVISQVEPETRI, but those letters can only come underneath the ASE of the line above if the letters preceding them have been considerably abbreviated. But, of course, if this line was engraved in letters larger than the rest it must have been abbreviated in order to make it conform in length with the other hexameters. There is nothing

A EO

HICHABITASEPRIVSSANCTOSCOGNOSCEREDEBES

NOIA@QVEPETRIPARITERPAVLIQREQVIRIS

DISCIPVLOSORIENSMISITQVODSPONTEFATEMVR

SANGVINISOBMERITVMCHRISTVMQVIPERASTRASECVTI

AETHERIOSPETIERESINVSREGNAQVEPIORVM

ROMASVOSPOTIVSMERVITDEFENDERECIVES

HAECDAMASVSVESTRASREFERATNOVASIDERALAVDES

Conjectural restoration of the inscription.—Hic Habitasse.

surprising in the fact, the only question is what form the abbreviation actually took. Here, as it seems to me, one can gain assistance from the later copy in the Platonia. The abbreviations in the other lines are probably the copyist's own, for there is no reason to think that these were abbreviated at all, but those in the second line are likely to be authentic, since, if he had the original shorter forms before his eyes, he would be unlikely to substitute others. The S in the middle of the first Q, too, is so characteristic of these Damasine inscriptions that we may safely adopt it. Moreover, if we take the form there given NOIAQQV, and continue with the E we already have, the letters will fall exactly into their place below the S of the first line and above the O of *Oriens* in the third. There is the smallest possible scrap of the R following the O. Continuing the second line we have the down-stroke of *Petri* though the rest of the P is lost. Then we have at once in letters of the same size ET and the down-stroke of the R, the rest of the letter being lost. Lastly, we have a P or R still of the larger size, which may very well begin *pariter*.[1] After that there is no other fragment which can be identified as giving a complete letter.

Of the smaller series of letters very few have survived. The O of the big fragment fits very well for *Oriens* and the M underneath will belong to *meritum*. But in that case the *sanguinis* before it must have been abbreviated, which is probable enough as the line is the longest of all. Next we have an EN which may very well belong to *Oriens*, and the top of a letter underneath which would do for the T of *meritum* which

[1] Or, considering the large space above this letter, it may perhaps be assigned with greater probability to the last R in *requiris*.

would fall naturally in that position. There is an E with nothing over and a curved fracture which suggests an S following, which may possibly be the end of the first line DEBES, the heading not reaching so far. There is a QV with apparently an E over which may very well be QVOD with the E of *pariter* above. Finally, there is a fragment which seems hopeful, RI with EO above it. There are plenty of places where RI occurs in the inscription, but three of them are in the second line and the size of the letters will not allow of its being any of these. Nor can it belong to *Oriens* for the EO on the line above are small letters. There remains one place only to which we can assign them. They must belong to PRIVS in the first line and the EO above must be part of the heading we have already realized must have been there. There is space for two or at most three letters between the A we already have and this EO. As a restoration LAVS DEO suggests itself and as a conjectural replacement of the whole, taking into consideration the necessity of centring, perhaps:

LAVS DEO VNI ☧ OMNIPOTENTI

But this, of course, is nothing more than conjecture.

This reconstruction seemed to me to give much probability, if not certainty, to the hypothesis that these fragments really are fragments of the famous inscription, and it became necessary next to inquire where and when they had been discovered. They had been found, I was told, in 1909 by Fr. Colagrossi O.F.M., when he discovered the very ancient *cella* or detached chapel known, from the graffito of the fourth century scratched upon its wall, as the *Domus Petri* or House of Peter. They were all among the earth and

rubbish with which the *cella* was filled, and were found within two or three feet of the most interesting and extremely ancient altar which is still standing in the apse. Although the lettering was at once recognized as Damasine in character, and as belonging to some unknown Damasine inscription, the discovery seems to have attracted but little attention at the time; and to no one does it seem at any time to have occurred that these could actually be the fragments of the inscription which was well known to have been placed precisely in this group of buildings, and for which every archaeologist in Rome was at the moment eagerly searching. Not till the present time, twenty years after the discovery, has it occurred to any one, apparently, to attempt the identification.

Fr. Colagrossi himself thought, from the place in which the fragments were found, and from the thinness of the marble, and again from certain indications on the altar itself, that the inscription had been placed on the front of the altar. This, however, does not seem likely. It would be a very unusual place for such an inscription, and one would doubt whether there would be sufficient space. A tablet fixed on the wall would seem much more probable.

The name of the place where the fragments were found is a point of the greatest importance. The graffito *Domus Petri*, which has given the name by which this little shrine is generally known, was probably scratched by a worshipper who had the tablet there before his eyes, and had come to visit the spot where Peter and Paul once lived. As there is no connexion here with any tomb, the word *habitasse* must be given its proper sense: 'Here the Saints once lived.'

The only time at which SS. Peter and Paul can have lived together in Rome, or rather three miles outside of Rome, would seem to be the last months of their lives, immediately before their martyrdom, when they were hiding from their persecutors.

The discovery of a large Roman villa of the second century, with portions of an earlier date, under the western end of San Sebastiano, seems to help to explain the story, though, of course, since there are no records, the imagination must be called in to help us. The city was now too dangerous, so refuge was taken in this secluded spot, close by the main road but hidden in a hollow. Here they lived in hiding, not in the villa but close by, and here we may suppose they were captured. A 'memoria' was built very early to commemorate the fact.

The little shrine is assigned by Fr. Colagrossi to the second half of the second century, say 160 or 170. It is very difficult to date this building, and I cannot claim the technical knowledge required to justify me in expressing an opinion. There are, however, two points to which I should like to draw attention. The first is the very singular orientation of the building. The priest at the altar would face not to the east as is usual, but a little south of south-east. The altar is almost at right angles to that of the later basilica. Is it possible that the building may be so early as to preserve the primitive Christian custom of praying towards Jerusalem? Certainly it faces precisely in that direction. In the east the Nazarene and other Judaeo-Christian bodies kept up the Kibla of Jerusalem till very late, so that Mohammed learnt the custom from them, though he changed it afterwards and ordered his followers to

pray towards Mecca. In the west by the time of the peace of the Church all Christian edifices were built so that the priest at the altar faced due east. At what time during the age of persecution the custom was changed and the prayer towards Jerusalem was given up is unknown, but it hardly seems likely that it long survived the destruction of Jerusalem. The second point to which I should wish to draw attention is that it would be much more probable that such a building should have been erected during the thirty years' peace of the reigns of Vespasian and Titus and the early years of Domitian, than during the long period of persecution which followed. Even if the present little church be adjudged to be later than that period in construction, it is conceivable that it followed the foundations of an earlier structure and preserved the orientation.

This assignment of St. Damasus' inscription to the *Domus Petri*, if it be accepted, is clearly a matter of real importance in the new light it throws upon the history of the Apostles in Rome. It also will have its influence on the many and much debated questions connected with the spot, but this we must leave to a later chapter.

IV

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

WE have no means of telling when it was that the arrest of the two Apostles was actually effected. In the case of St. Paul the message sent to Timothy in the Second Epistle, telling him that he was in prison, in close confinement 'as if he were a malefactor' and begging that Timothy would come to him before winter,[1] suggests an imprisonment of some months. It is no longer under the mild conditions of his previous experience. Epaphroditus has great difficulty in finding him.[2] This time he has no doubt of the final issue, for the death sentence is certain as soon as he is brought to trial.[3] But for some reason, possibly because he has again pleaded his Roman citizenship and his previous acquittal, and once more appealed to the Emperor in person, he does not expect his trial to come on at once. The local tradition is that the Apostles were in prison for nine months and it looks as if this might be true in the case of St. Paul. But St. Peter's trial would not be likely to be delayed for any long time, once he had been arrested. However important might be his position as a leader of the Christian sectaries, in the eyes of the law he was only one of the *peregrini*; a mere Jewish peasant from Galilee, who had no right to any special consideration. With him the magistrates could deal at once, as with any other Christians of lower rank. There would be no reason for keeping him in prison and incurring needless trouble and expense. All that would

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 9. [2] 2 Tim. i. 17. [3] 2 Tim. iv. 6.

be necessary would be for him to be brought before the competent magistrates, to be asked the simple question whether he was a Christian, and on his acknowledgement of the fact, for him to be sentenced forthwith to whichever of the punishments suitable for such people might please his judges; either crucifixion, or exposure in the arena, or, if they thought fit, hard labour for life in the mines or quarries. Such as he were easily dealt with, for they had no right of appeal. And then the authorities may well have gone on to say: 'Now that we have both the leaders of this accursed sect in our hands, why should we wait for the Emperor's return to try the other? Even if he is a Roman citizen and has appealed to the Emperor, Nero has left all powers in the hands of Helius. Why should they not both suffer together, at least on the same day, even if the difference in their status demands different punishments and in different localities? It would strike a blow at these Christians which would put terror into them and make them more amenable and loyal to the State, and might even put an end to them altogether so far as Rome itself is concerned.'

I

We can know nothing certainly, for nothing definite has been recorded. Tradition points out the Mamertine prison, close to the Capitol and the Forum, as having been the scene of their last captivity. The earliest evidence for it is in the Acts of St. Processus and St. Martinianus, a document apparently not earlier than the fifth century. These two martyrs are said to have been the gaolers of the Mamertine and to have been baptized in the prison by St. Peter in the fountain

which still remains there, of which the story is that it flowed miraculously from the rock at Peter's bidding to enable him to carry out the baptism. We can say, at any rate, with certainty that the Mamertine prison, below which was the dungeon of the 'Tullianum', as it then was called, was in use at that time as one of the principal prisons of Rome, though it was no longer, as it had once been at a much earlier date, the only one in existence. It is described by Sallust in his account of the Catiline conspirators. 'There is a place called the Tullianum, to which you go down a little to the left, about twelve feet below the ground level. There are walls all round it and above there is a chamber with stone vaulting. Its whole appearance is rough, dark, foul-smelling and terrible.'[1]

Even to-day, though the upper chamber has been turned into a church, San Pietro in Carcere, and though the lower dungeon is now approached by a staircase, whereas formerly prisoners were let down through a hole, the place impresses one with horror more than almost any other spot in Rome. The lower dungeon has been the scene of many tragedies. Here State prisoners like the Catilinarian conspirators were strangled one by one. Here Jugurtha was starved to death by Marius. Here Vercingetorix, the gallant chieftain of Gaul, was put to death by Julius Caesar. Here, too, Simon Bar-Jonas, the last defender of Jerusalem in the terrible siege of A.D. 70, was strangled, only a few years after the death of the Apostles, after being led in captivity through the streets of Rome in the Triumph of Titus. The place, even to-day, is

[1] Sall. *Catil.* lv: 'incultu, tenebris, odore foeda atque terribilis ejus facies est'.

eloquent of misery. Dickens's description is well known but perhaps worth repeating.

'It is small and low-roofed, and the dread and gloom of the ponderous, obdurate old prison are on it, as if they had come up in a dark mist through the floor. . . . It is all so silent, and so close, and tomblike; and the dungeons below are so black, and stealthy, and stagnant, and naked; that this little dark spot becomes a dream within a dream; and in the vision of great churches which come rolling past me like a sea, it is a small wave by itself, that melts into no other wave, and does not flow on with the rest.'

If there is one point on which modern critical writers especially tend to show an almost total lack of historical imagination it is surely that of the date of the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul. Here is a question on which, beyond all others, Roman tradition ought to be trustworthy. Other places and peoples might easily be in doubt on the point. There is no reason why, for instance, the compiler of the Clementine romances, far away in the east, should have had any accurate knowledge on the matter. But Rome at any rate could never forget. If it be true at all that the great Apostles were martyred in Rome, it is inconceivable that the accurate remembrance of the event should have faded from Christian memory. Men are apt to forget that the memory of an individual as to any outstanding event may extend over a very long period, and that besides this there is such a thing as a corporate memory in a community, especially if it be stimulated and kept in being by a ceremony of annual recurrence. Yet this must certainly have been the case with regard to the martyrdom of the two Apostles. Rome simply could not forget at least the main facts of the tragedy.

The present writer comes of a long-lived family and need not go beyond his own family circle for instances to illustrate what he is saying. His mother died at a great age in 1927. She could remember clearly to the last, how she was taken to hear Princess Victoria proclaimed Queen in June 1837. There we have a clear memory, of an event only of secondary importance, extending over ninety years. There was another old lady whom he was often taken to see as a child. She could remember the French Revolution and the execution of Marie Antoinette. As a child she had lived in Philadelphia, where her father held a high legal position, and she had known Benjamin Franklin. But Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706, three years before Dr. Johnson, and eight years before the death of Queen Anne. If the present writer equals the years of his mother, an improbable supposition, no doubt, but not an impossible one, there would be a stretch of 250 years covered by the three lives. It would have been possible for Franklin to have told the old lady in question of some event of his early childhood—the great fire, perhaps, in Boston in 1711—and for her to have passed on the account. Just in the same way it would have been possible for a Christian child in Rome in the year 67 to have been actually present at St. Peter's martyrdom and to have seen him nailed to the cross, and still to have been alive and able to tell the tale in 150. And the child to whom he told it then could have told the story again in his own extreme old age to one who lived to see the peace of the Church in 312 under Constantine. Is it conceivable, considering what the deaths of the Apostles meant to Christianity in Rome, that Rome could have forgotten? Did the Royalist

child in London who knew how Charles I was beheaded outside the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, on 30 January 1648/9, forget in later years when and where it had happened? Did the Royalist child in Paris who saw and heard the tumbrel roll past with Marie Antoinette going on her way to execution, forget in after life when and where that had happened, and whether it was before the fall of Robespierre or after? Just in like manner, while there are some points in the history of those early days where tradition may fail us, the date and the place of the martyrdom of the two Apostles cannot be among them. On those points Roman tradition, the corporate memory of the Roman Church concerning the most tragic and terrible moment of her life, must be allowed to be of overwhelming value and undoubted accuracy.

2

There are three points to be decided, and we will take them in order. Were the Apostles martyred on the same day? If so, what was the actual day, and in what year did the event take place?

First: were the Apostles both martyred on the same day?—For the Catholic the difficulty is not so much to account for the extraordinary pre-eminence of St. Peter in Roman tradition, as to explain why it is that St. Paul is so closely united to him. For St. Paul, after all, was only a short time in Rome. He has left there hardly any memories. Scarcely any spot in Rome, except only the place of his martyrdom and his tomb, has any connexion with the story of his life. Yet it is not merely that he ranks in Roman tradition by the side of St. Peter, with him but always after him—that

would be easily understood and only natural. But it is that he is joined with St. Peter in a union of passionate love, such as can find no parallel among other saints of whatever age. Peter and Paul; Paul and Peter; always the two names must go together, never must they be separated. Together, they are the founders of the Roman Church, who laid the firm foundation and cemented it with the blood of their passion. Together, they are the twin tutelaries, the defenders of Rome against every danger that otherwise would overwhelm her: the Castor and Pollux of the new hierarchy of heaven. Together, they are commemorated in the Roman Liturgy, united as are no other saints in all the Calendar. Never in Roman tradition can Peter's feast be kept, but Paul must be remembered. Never, in like manner, can Paul be mentioned, but Peter must have his commemoration immediately after, breaking if necessary all ordinary liturgical rules to ensure that the two commemorations are together and in no way separated one from the other. Whence comes this extraordinary union of the two; this raising up of St. Paul to share with absolute equality in the honours of St. Peter as far as Rome herself is concerned—though never of course in his solitary and unique pre-eminence as Vicar of Christ and Ruler of the whole Church? It is easily and naturally accounted for on the supposition that a single day saw the extinction of both these great lights of heaven; that a single catastrophe plunged the Church of Rome into unutterable misery and depression; so that the whole future of the Church seemed to be jeopardized. If Christian Rome went through a period of hopeless misery comparable only to that of Christian Jerusalem on the day when the Christ lay in

the tomb and all seemed lost beyond redemption, and if that misery burned itself into the heart and recollection of all who lived through it, then the position of St. Paul as the fellow of St. Peter is easily and naturally accounted for, but on no other supposition. On one single day they bowed their heads to the slaughter; on one single day Christian Rome found herself bereaved of both her Fathers; on one single day both of them had passed from the troubles of earth into the glory of heaven and the presence of their Master. Lovely and pleasant had they been in their lives, and now in their deaths they were not divided. Could Roman Christians ever forget the day, or ever again think of either of them without the other coming immediately into their affectionate and grateful recollection?

There is another reason why we may be quite sure that the memory of the actual day of the martyrdom was accurately remembered, and this is to be found in the customs of honouring the dead which were current at the time both among Pagans and Christians in Rome. On the anniversary of the burial it was a recognized custom in Rome in the first century to visit the tomb of a departed relative or friend, or, in the more general case of cremation, the place where his ashes were deposited. Special ceremonies were enacted and sacrifices offered on certain days immediately succeeding the deposition of the body, especially on the ninth and thirtieth day, and these were afterwards repeated every year on the recurrence of the anniversaries. Gatherings of the family and of friends took place at the sepulchre on these days, and a meal was eaten there in commemoration of the dead. There was often an upper chamber built over the grave for

the purpose of these gatherings, and many tombs thus constructed may still be seen, some of the best being those along the Via Latina. St. Peter's own tomb, as we shall see presently, had an upper chamber of this kind, and the tradition still survives at Rome, many modern family burying-places in the Campo Verano and elsewhere being constructed in this way. The early Christians naturally took over the Pagan customs in this matter and kept their private anniversaries just as every one else was doing. Later on they used these upper chambers where they existed, and the *cubicularia* of the catacombs, for the special purpose of public annual religious commemorations of the martyrs at their tombs. The *natale* of a martyr, as the anniversary of their deaths came to be called, being the day of their birth into the new life, was celebrated every year. During nearly thirty years which followed the death of Nero at Rome there was no further persecution of the Christians, and no prohibition of their funeral ceremonies. There was, therefore, every opportunity for the observance of the anniversary. The fact that the 29th of June, *a.d. III Kal. Julii*, was the *natale* alike of St. Peter and of St. Paul, the anniversary in each case of the martyrdom, and that therefore both the tombs should be visited on that day, must have been well known to every Roman Christian from the first. There is nothing that so securely keeps up the memory of a past event as an annual celebration connected with it. The fact that there was a service commemorating it in the Book of Common Prayer, and the consequent annual stimulation of popular bigotry, is the reason why no one to-day has any doubt what it was that happened on 5 November, though it was more

than 300 years ago that it took place. There was just as little difficulty in Christian Rome in keeping alive the memory of an event of so much greater importance throughout the 250 years that elapsed between the date of the martyrdom and the peace of the Church.

This careful celebration of the *natale* or anniversary of the martyrs is of course well known and is the origin of our modern Calendars. The proof that it existed in some form from the very first, even if not yet liturgical, and must have applied to St. Peter and St. Paul as well as to the later martyrs, is to be found in the consideration of the fact that the custom, besides being deeply rooted in human nature, was itself taken over from the Pagan and Jewish customs of the time, and that it is expressly mentioned in the very first authentic account of a martyrdom which has come down to us. In the well-known letter of 'the Church of God in Smyrna' written to record the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, the hope is expressed that the Lord will 'grant them to celebrate the *birthday of his martyrdom* with joy and gladness'.[1] That was written in the middle of the second century, and evidently shows that the custom was then long established and universally recognized. It was, in fact, simply the usual Pagan or rather the universal practice of Rome, carried on unchanged in the Christian Church.[2] To take a single instance which shows how the dates of such *natalia* were recorded we may choose the celebrated inscription found at Lanuvium (*Civita Lavinia*) in 1816. It is the record of a 'Collegium' or guild, dedicated to

[1] Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, iii. 396. Cf. Tertullian, *De Coron.* 3: 'Oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis annua die facimus'.

[2] For the Pagan customs see Smith's *Dict. of Antiquities*, s.v. 'Funus', or for the Jewish see the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, s.v. Jahrzeit.

Diana and Antinous, which had been formed to arrange for the sepulchral rites of its members, who were mostly very poor. The inscription is in this form:

VIII. IDVS MARTIAS NATALI CAESENNI PATRIS
XIII. K. SEPT. NATALI CAESENNI SILVANI FRATRIS

and so on. It only needs to change the names and put in Lawrence, Agnes, and so forth under their proper dates of martyrdom to obtain a Christian Calendar in its most primitive form.

In the second and third centuries there arose certain heretics in the Church, especially in Africa, whose object was to exalt St. Paul and his teaching, and to represent him as having been head of the Church, just as the Ebionite Jewish heretics wished to exalt St. James. For this purpose they desired to represent St. Paul as having survived St. Peter and succeeded to his place and authority. But, since all the world knew that the *natale* of each Apostle was on the same day, they were reduced to the expedient of saying that it was on the same day that both were martyred but in different years; the idea being suggested possibly by the case of St. Cyprian and St. Cornelius who were both martyred on 16 September but in different years. Both Prudentius[1] and St. Augustine of Hippo[2] were misled by this statement, but the tradition at Rome was never doubtful, and the idea was formally repudiated, as being due to heretical misrepresentation, by a Roman Council under St. Gelasius about A.D. 500.

When we come to consider the question in which year it was that the Apostles suffered we are on less

[1] Prudentius, *De Martyribus*, hymn xii.
[2] St. Augustine, *Sermons*, 296–7.

firm ground of tradition. The yearly commemoration preserves the memory of the day, but the year itself can only be fixed, in the absence of written tradition, by a certain effort of memory. Many of us, for instance, might find it difficult to say offhand and with certainty in what year it was that Queen Victoria died and King Edward ascended the throne. We might have to associate it with other events before we could feel quite certain that we were right in saying that it was in 1901 and not in 1902. Just so, in the lapse of years, Roman tradition might easily have failed to retain with certainty whether it was in 66 or in 67 that the double martyrdom took place. It was on 29 June; that was certain. It was some little time, two or three years, after the massacre of the Vatican, for the place was known where the Apostles had lived in hiding. It was before the death of Nero, that too was certain, for the persecution ceased in Rome with Nero's death. But still there might have been a doubt remaining in Roman tradition as to the exact year. It is, however, settled for us by the letter of St. Clement to the Corinthians which mentions definitely that St. Paul suffered 'under the rulers'.[1] Either the phrase has no meaning at all or it must mean that the martyrdom took place during the time that Nero was absent from the city, and that sentence was pronounced not by the Emperor in person but by the *Praefecti* whom he had left in charge. It is noteworthy too that several of the apocryphal 'Acts' represent the Apostles as condemned not by the Emperor but by the praefects.[2] As it would have been much more natural and effective for these romancers to bring Nero himself on the scene it looks

[1] Clement, *Ad Cor.* v. 6.

[2] Lipsius, *Acta Petri*, pp. 10, 90, 233.

as if this tradition that the condemnation was actually due to the praefects was well known in Roman tradition. As Nero left Rome late in 66 and returned early in 68, it was only in 67 that he was absent on the date of 29 June. The date is confirmed again by St. Jerome who tells us that it was two years after the death of Seneca, and Seneca's death was in 65. It should not be forgotten that St. Jerome wrote with quite exceptional opportunities of learning the truth, being Secretary to Pope Damasus, with all the Christian archives which had survived the persecution at his disposal. No modern writer can have the same opportunities, and therefore one should ask for very strong evidence on the other side before disputing St. Jerome's formal conclusions.

In modern times there has been a strong tendency, led by Monsignor Duchesne, to suggest that the date of 29 June is really only the anniversary of an imagined translation of the bodies of the two Apostles in the year 258. But since there never was any such translation of the relics, either then or at any other time, as we shall see in a later chapter,[1] that opinion is left without any support whatever. The date of 28 December found in some eastern calendars is due only to the desire to group the feasts of some of the greater Saints, as we still do in the case of St. John and St. Stephen, during the period of the Christmas festivities. June 29 remains as the only date for which any traditional support can be quoted.

3

As misunderstanding on the subject seems still to persist even among scholars from whom one might

[1] *Infra*, p. 112.

expect greater clarity of thought, it may be well to say a few words upon the mutual relations of St. Peter and St. Paul in Roman devotion. St. Peter stood to Rome in a double capacity. He was the founder of the Roman Church, no doubt, but he was more than that. He was the chief of the Apostles, invested by our Lord Himself with the supreme authority. In that office he was necessarily alone. St. Paul had no share in that commission. So we do not find St. Paul represented or spoken of as the Good Shepherd, or as the new Moses striking the rock, or receiving the Law of the New Testament from the hands of Christ. In those aspects St. Peter is always and necessarily alone. But when it is not the Universal Church but the local Church of Rome that is in question, then St. Paul is admitted whole-heartedly to the fullest and most absolute equality with St. Peter. Together they rank as founders of the Church, although by St. Paul's own admission St. Peter has the prior claim, and together they are regarded as the protectors alike of the city and of the local Church. In this sphere there is no precedence. The martyrdom of St. Paul at Rome raised him to absolute equality with St. Peter, so that men spoke as often of St. Paul and St. Peter as of St. Peter and St. Paul. The order soon became a question merely of personal devotion, though St. Peter is always first in ecclesiastical documents.

There is another misunderstanding which it may be well to clear away. Many modern writers have been puzzled by the fact that where both Apostles are represented together, especially in the oldest examples of all, it is St. Paul who generally is depicted on the right and St. Peter on the left. They have argued from

this circumstance that St. Paul in the earliest ages was regarded in Rome as the superior even of St. Peter. A little knowledge is often a dangerous thing. They were unaware that in Rome from the earliest times, and for many centuries after, although in the time of Augustus the greater dignity of the right was already creeping in from Greece, the Roman place of honour was always on the left. There are abundant instances to be found in Rome even up to the thirteenth century. On the altar lately found at San Sebastian on which both our Lord and St. Peter are represented as the Good Shepherd, it is our Lord who is on the left, St. Peter on the right. On some official Papal Seals even to-day St. Paul is on the right and St. Peter on the left. To this day the whole Latin Church makes the sign of the cross from left to right while the Greeks make it from right to left.[1]

4

Passing on to the question of the actual localities in which the martyrdoms took place we find that although no claim to be the scene of the death of St. Paul has ever been made on behalf of any other place than the *Aquae Salviae*, the matter stands differently in the case of St. Peter. Every tourist knows the beautiful Church of San Pietro in Montorio, with the little circular *tempietto* of Bramante at its side, standing on the Janiculum, just at the spot from which the most extensive view of the modern city is obtainable. If this were indeed the place of the martyrdom, we should all of us

[1] See for this point any good Latin Dictionary, s.v. 'Sinister'. Also A. L. Frothingham, 'Ancient Orientation Unveiled', *Am. J. of Arch.* xxi, and A. S. Barnes, 'The Lucky Left', in *Dublin Review*, Jan. 1923. In dealing with works of art of the first four centuries this question of right and left often tells us whether or not the artist was under Greek influence.

feel that it was admirably appropriate and suggestive. There can, however, be but little doubt that it was not here, but in the Circus of Nero, already hallowed by the martyrdoms of A.D. 64, that the crucifixion of the great Apostle took place. The ancient authorities are here in complete agreement. The *Liber Pontificalis* tells us that St. Peter's grave was to be found 'on the Aurelian Way in the temple of Apollo, near the place where he was crucified, near the palace of Nero on the Vatican in the Triumphal district',[1] and so by implication asserts that the place of crucifixion was on the Vatican and close to the tomb. The *Martyrium Beati Petri Apostoli* is even more exact, and tells us that it was 'at the place which is called the Naumachia near the obelisk of Nero on the hill'[2] that the cross was placed, and with this agree the Greek 'Acts' of Peter and Paul which define the spot as 'under the terebinth near the Naumachia in the place that is called the Vatican'.[3]

Another form of the 'Acts' of Peter, again, tells us that the place was 'in the palace of Nero near the obelisk between the two *metae*'. This mention of the obelisk and the two *metae* fixes the place beyond a doubt as the circus of Nero, the two *metae* being the turning-posts at the ends of the *spina*, round which the chariots turned, while the obelisk retained its original position until 1586 when it was removed by Sixtus V to the place it now occupies in the centre of the great piazza. There is, however, a memorial of its ancient position still remaining, in the shape of a flat stone with an inscription, let into the pavement close by the door of

[1] *Lib. Pont.*, p. 64.
[2] *Acta Petri*, ed. Lipsius, p. 13.
[3] Ibid., p. 216.

the present sacristy. The memory of the fact was also preserved in the old Basilica by an altar of the Crucifixion placed at the nearest possible spot to the actual locality, and the tradition has been carried on in the present church, where the chief altar of the south transept, the left-hand one as one looks up the church, is still the altar of the Crucifixion and is only a few feet away from the actual spot.

The selection of San Pietro in Montorio as the probable scene of the martyrdom seems to have been the result of the faulty antiquarianism of the fourteenth century. As time went on the true tradition had become obscured, overshadowed by the proximity of the tomb of the Apostle. An ancient chapel of the crucifixion which, apparently, had been erected originally on the spot where St. Peter suffered and in commemoration of his death, had come to be looked upon as dedicated to the Passion of Christ, and no clear knowledge remained in Rome as to the locality in which the martyrdom had actually taken place. Under these circumstances men began to try to deduce for themselves from the old records in what part of Rome it had been, but unfortunately with very indifferent success. They found out that St. Peter had suffered 'in *Monte Aureo*', 'near the Naumachia', and 'between the two *metae*, and each of these indications misled them. The *Mons Aureus*, originally a name given to the Vatican on account of its proximity to the *Via Aurelia*, had, in the course of time, first been extended to include the Janiculum and, later, been restricted to its southern part, the part which still keeps the name of Montorio, evidently a corruption of the ancient *Mons Aureus*. The Naumachia of Augustus, an artificial lake

for naval displays, was much larger than that of Nero and had been situated at the foot of this part of the Janiculum, so this confirmed them in their wrong impression. Lastly, the term *meta*, instead of being applied to the turning-posts of a circus, was, in the Middle Ages, applied to those tombs of a pyramidal shape, two of which were still surviving; the one, that of Gaius Cestius, near the Porta S. Paolo, and the other close to the Church of Sta Maria Traspontina. These two were known in the fourteenth century as the *metae* of Romulus and of Remus. It was noted that if a line joining these two were bisected the centre would fall about the place where the Church of San Pietro in Montorio now stands, and this it was that finally decided the selection of the spot. The two *metae*, as pyramidal tombs, may be seen in the representation of the martyrdom upon the bronze doors which were in the old Basilica and now serve as the central entrance to the modern church. This lower part, however, on which the two *metae* are shown dates only from the sixteenth century.

The mistake thus made is so far unfortunate that it has obscured and confused the genuine tradition, but it must not be forgotten that to it we owe two very beautiful monuments, the Church of St. Peter upon the Janiculum, which has such a wonderful view of Rome from the terrace in front of it, and the little circular temple which Bramante built over the spot where the cross was supposed to have been fixed. Certainly if we could have had the choice of the spot which seemed most fit for the enactment of such a tragedy, none could be found more apt to call forth pious meditations than this, where St. Peter's Church

dominates the city of Rome, which then put him to a cruel death, but now owes to him, and to him alone, her proud boast that she is the Eternal City, and the mistress of the world.

St. Paul was led out, as became a Roman citizen, some distance beyond the walls, to the third milestone on a small road branching from the Ostian Way, and there, far from the crowds of Rome and in comparative privacy, with only a few spectators, suffered the honourable punishment of decapitation. Such was the law, which forbade the indignities of crucifixion and similar barbarous punishments to be inflicted on a Roman citizen. The axe, which had been the instrument of execution in earlier days, and was therefore carried by the lictors, had given place to the sword in the early days of the Empire.

The Bollandists have thrown a quite needless doubt upon the authenticity of the claim of the *Aquae Salviae*, or 'the Three Fountains', as the place is now called, to be the scene of this martyrdom. They were, however, answered by De Rossi,[1] who pointed out that the road in question is both ancient and Roman, and that Nibby,[2] whom the Bollandists followed, is completely wrong in what he says on the subject. The tradition is quite uniform, and no other place has ever been suggested as being the true site. We can trace the tradition back as far as the time of Gregory the Great, for an inscription recording the gift of land by him to the Ostian Basilica was formerly to be seen on the walls of St. Paul's, and though destroyed in the fire, is recorded at full length by Severano.[3] St. Gregory speaks ex-

[1] *Bull. di arch. crist*, 1869, p. 83.
[2] Nibby, *Analisi della carta*, iii. 279.
[3] *Sette chiese*, p. 290.

pressly of this land as being the place where St. Paul 'receiving the crown of martyrdom was beheaded that he might live'.[1] It is an interesting fact, too, that in some excavations on the spot made in 1869 a number of petrified pine-cones were found, for the ancient Greek *Acta* say that St. Paul suffered under a pine tree.[2] A number of coins of the time of Nero were found at the same time.

St. Peter, unlike St. Paul in this respect, had of course no right of Roman citizenship to protect him, and he was condemned to the death of crucifixion, and that in the most public spot possible—the circus of Nero—already the scene of the terrible massacre of three years before. In such a place his punishment would be rendered more bitter by the presence of a mocking crowd. To St. Peter's mind, however, this was but an added honour, for so his privilege would be the greater, in that his sufferings would thus more closely resemble those of his Lord and Master. It had been foretold to him, years before, that he should so die, and he had treasured it always in his mind as the most splendid mark of his Master's favour, given to him as the crowning privilege immediately after his investiture as the universal shepherd of the Christian flock. 'When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldest not. This He said signifying by what death he should glorify God.'[3]

But, closely as the death of the Vatican resembled that which had taken place on Calvary, there was still, it is recorded, a significant difference; a difference

[1] *Bull. di arch. crist.*, 1869, p. 84.
[2] Armellini, *Chiese di Roma*, p. 940.
[3] St. John xxi. 18.

which was made at the request of the Apostle himself. He was crucified, not in the ordinary method, but with his head downwards, as a great act of humility, because he did not count himself worthy to suffer altogether in the same way as his Lord. It is from Origen[1] that we learn of this; the Latin authorities, such as St. Clement of Rome and Tertullian, do not mention it, but speak only of his having 'suffered a passion like unto that of the Saviour'.[2] Later fathers all adopt the words of Origen, and thus it has passed into the universally accepted tradition of the Church. There are, however, certain difficulties in the way of an unhesitating acceptance of the story, which it seems only fair to state, especially as it forms no part of the strictly local tradition. It is not that there is any impossibility or even improbability of such a punishment being inflicted. Seneca tells us that it was not unknown at Rome at this very time. 'I have seen', he says, 'crosses of many kinds . . . and some hung with their heads downwards.'[3] Among the saints the boy St. Calliopius[4] is said to have been thus put to death at his mother's request, and it has always been common enough in eastern countries, of which the story of the Japanese martyrs is a noteworthy instance. But in all these cases the method employed would seem to have been the same. The cross was erected in the ordinary way, and the person to be executed was hauled up to it by means of a rope round the ankles and passing over the arms of the cross. But in St. Peter's case this method does not seem to satisfy the condition of our Lord's promise that 'he should stretch out his hands'. The story as given

[1] In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 1.
[2] Tertullian, *De praeser.* 36; cf. *Scorp.* 15.
[3] Seneca, *Cons. ad Marciam.* 20.
[4] *Mart. Rom.*, 7 April.

in the apocryphal *Acta* is that it was done at the request of the Apostle.

'Then Peter when he came to the cross said: "Since my Lord Jesus Christ, who when He came down from heaven to earth was raised aloft on a cross, has deigned to call me also from earth to heaven, my cross should have my head towards the earth and turn my feet to heaven. I am not worthy to be on the cross as was my Lord; turn my cross over" (*girate crucem meam*). So they turned his cross and fixed his feet upwards and his hands below.'[1]

Whether or no we feel able to accept this story as it stands, in spite of all difficulties and the want of support in early Roman tradition, we shall all feel that there may well be this foundation for it (for legends generally have some real foundation), that St. Peter did actually ask in his great humility that this additional humiliation and degradation might be inflicted upon him. Nor surely is it all loss if any feel inclined to accept this version of the martyrdom as the more probable; for then, while we retain the thought of his touching humility, we can also dwell upon the favour shown him by His Master, who would not allow His apostle and vicar to come short of the fullness of the honour He had twice promised to him. To him alone of all the Apostles was there given, in that case, the privilege of 'following Him' even to the end, and dying by a passion like His own; 'stretching out his hands all the day', upon the cross, 'to a people that did not believe and that spoke against him'.[2]

[1] *Passio SS. App. Petri et Pauli*, ed. Lipsius, p. 171.

[2] St. John xiii. 36; xxi. 18–20. Cf. Rom. x. 21, and Is. lxv. 2.

V

AD CATACUMBAS

THE FIRST PLACE OF BURIAL

A VISITOR returning to Rome after a long absence naturally finds many changes: some that are welcome; more, perhaps, that, for one reason or another, he is inclined to regret. One such change, to one visitor at least, has caused poignant sorrow. It is the change that has come over one of the great Apostolic sanctuaries—the *Platonia* on the Appian Way, which adjoins, on a lower level, the Basilica of San Sebastiano. Comparatively few years ago it was still the home of the most sacred associations of past ages. Here, it was believed, the bodies of the two great Apostles had rested, once at least and possibly on two separate occasions, perhaps for a long period of years, safely hidden from the persecutors. Here St. Philip Neri had been wont to spend whole nights in prayer. Here, at the instigation of that great Saint, was the very centre of the devotion of the Seven Churches, which he revived so successfully among the Romans of his day. Hither again, in pilgrimage, came St. Bridget and St. Gertrude, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Pius V. Of old days it stood in the first rank amongst the sanctuaries of Rome, giving place of honour only to the Apostolic tombs on the Vatican and on the Ostian Way.

But now!—It stands dismantled and in ruins, filled with dust and utterly neglected; holes made here and there in its walls and floor, and left open and uncared for; a scene of absolute desolation. No visitor is taken there; no one cares to trouble the sacristan to open the

door; the altar where St. Philip said Mass so often is dismantled and desecrated; the *fenestrella* which gave access to the Apostolic tomb below is broken and lies in pieces on the floor; where once the saints knelt in prayer and ecstasy, there is now, as the present writer saw it not long ago, only desolation and ruin, unfaith and neglect.

One asks what is the reason of a change so great, and one is told that it is the work of Catholic archaeologists, of devout and learned men from the Campo Santo Teutonico of Rome, and of the Papal Commission for Sacred Archaeology. These men have investigated the facts; they have found out, so they say, that the saints were utterly mistaken; that St. Peter and St. Paul were never in any way connected with the spot; that the devotion of Catholics for so many centuries was founded on a blunder, and that this so-called 'hiding-place of the Apostles' is in reality only a mausoleum in which for a time there once lay the remains of the martyr St. Quirinus. Naturally the place is no longer of interest to anybody and is left to the inevitable decay which must soon bring it to ruin. As the friar in charge says to the few visitors who still desire to go to the spot: 'Perchè vuole visitare la Platonia? Non è "la Platonia", è solamente il mausoleo di San Quirino?'

Has the last word been spoken, and is there no appeal from this hostile verdict of the archaeologists?

I

It is not that there is any fault to be found with the quality of the work that has been done by these German archaeologists. On the contrary, from the first, their investigations have been most carefully

conducted, every fact they have noticed has been most exactly recorded, and, except only in the case of the Platonia itself, the utmost care has been taken to protect the really important discoveries which have resulted from their labours. So far as the facts are concerned their work has been altogether admirable. It is in the interpretation of those facts and discoveries, that, as it seems to me, they have themselves gone far astray, and have led the learned world after them. They were discouraged because they found no Christian emblems, but they never remembered that Christian emblems would be as yet non-existent. Those who excavated round the tomb of St. Peter and again round that of St. Paul or in the crypt of the *Acilii Glabriones* found no Christian emblems but rather seemingly pagan surroundings just as in this case. It was what they ought to have expected. But they made the great and fundamental error of conducting their investigations with a theory already formulated in their minds. Unfortunately, this dominating theory, which coloured all their conclusions, was itself demonstrably false. They based everything on that impossible idea that there had been a translation of the bodies of the Apostles in the year 258. If that translation be a myth, their whole interpretation collapses like a house of cards. Meanwhile, however, it has for the moment carried all before it. The learned in every country, mostly without much first-hand knowledge of the question, have adopted it without hesitation. Even Professor Lietzmann, in his book *Petrus und Paulus in Rom*, gives us no results of any detailed personal investigation, but has taken over and incorporated entire the account given by Dr. von Gerkan, the Secretary of

the German Archaeological Institute at Rome. It needs some courage under these circumstances to stand up against conclusions so widely accepted. One would scarcely venture to do so were it not that the whole theory is so clearly based upon a fallacy, as well as being absolutely destructive of tradition. But, since this is so, even one who is less learned may venture to plead for a reconsideration of the evidence. After all, in so doing, he can claim to have de Rossi, Armellini, and Lanciani[1] on his side, while Marucchi, too, was never happy with the newer theories, as was evidenced in the twenty or more articles he wrote on the subject. To the last he maintained the position for which we are now pleading, that the *Platonia* cannot be explained as being nothing more than the Mausoleum of Quirinus, but that it must have been already in existence and held in veneration as a sanctuary dedicated to the memory of the great Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul long before the remains of Quirinus were brought to Rome.

The theory put forward by the Catholic German archaeologists and now apparently accepted without question by the whole learned world can be explained very simply. It is somewhat negative in character.

'The Platonia has no connexion whatever with the Apostles. Indeed it did not exist in their time. It was built at the end of the fourth century to serve as a mausoleum for the martyr Quirinus, whose relics were some time afterwards once more removed. It now calls, therefore, for no respect at all. The veneration given to it by all Christendom for 1,500 years was all a mistake. The bodies of the Apostles were never near the place at the time of their martyrdom.

[1] See especially *Atti della Pont. Acad. di Arch. cr.*, II. xiv. 84 seq., and *Wanderings through Ancient Roman Churches*, p. 80 seq.

St. Gregory, who says they were, is wrong. There was never any attempt to remove the relics to the East. St. Damasus and St. Gregory, who say there was, are wrong. The bodies of the Apostles were brought to the place called *ad Catacumbas* on June 29th in the year 258, in fear of desecration by the Roman authorities. June 29th is the date of this translation, not of the martyrdom. There is no evidence anywhere that this translation ever took place or that the relics were ever in any danger. The bodies were hidden somewhere underground. No one knows where. The recent excavations have not revealed the place. While they were there pilgrims came and scratched on the walls *graffiti* invoking St. Peter and St. Paul. No one knows how long the bodies remained there, or why or when they were taken back. There does exist a record of their being taken back, but it only raises fresh difficulties, for it seems that they were taken back by Pope Cornelius long before they had ever been brought to the Catacombs. That is all we know on the subject.'

No one can feel that such conclusions are satisfactory or that they leave no opening for further research.

2

When a subject has become involved in such deep confusion as that which is before us, it is always best to put aside from one's mind all that has been written in later years, and to go back to earlier traditions and start afresh from these. In recent years quite an undue amount of attention has been concentrated on a single entry in an ancient Calendar—the so-called 'Philocalian Calendar', or 'the Chronograph of 354'—and other evidence has been neglected. We will return to the Philocalian Calendar later on; it is full of interest and information, but for the moment we will consider the more definite testimony, even though it be of later

date, which is available from other sources. The first question to be settled is not what happened in 258 but what occurred immediately after the martyrdom. The Roman tradition in the sixth century on this point may be learnt from a letter written by Pope Gregory the Great to the Empress Constantina at Constantinople.

'It is well known', he says, 'that at the actual time of the martyrdom (*eo tempore quo passi sunt*) Christians from the East came to seek the bodies of the Apostles, as being their fellow countrymen, and having carried them as far as the second milestone from the city, laid them in the place called *ad Catacumbas*. Then, when the whole company of them assembled and endeavoured to take their bodies from thence, a storm of thunder and lightning so greatly terrified and dispersed them that after that they never made any more attempts. The Romans, however, then went out and took up their bodies, and laid them in the places where they are now buried.'[1]

The apocryphal 'Acts' of St. Peter and St. Paul,[2] which are about the same date, tell much the same story as does St. Gregory but with more wonderful details. They give us also the further information that the holy bodies remained at the Catacombs for a year and seven months and that only then were they removed to their final resting-places. But they too say definitely that the original place to which the bodies were taken was the Catacombs. Clearly there was some solid tradition as to an attempt to carry off the bodies of the Apostles to Jerusalem, for St. Damasus, who wrote 200 years earlier, is also evidently alluding to something of the kind in the verses of which we have already spoken and which seem to have been put up to

[1] *Opp. S. Greg.* ii, *ep.* 30 *ad Constantinam.*

[2] *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, ed. Lipsius, Leipzig, 1891, pp. 175, 221.

commemorate the residence of the Apostles on the spot now occupied by the *Domus Petri.*

We then quoted only the first two lines. The full text of the verses is as follows:

HIC HABITASSE PRIUS SANCTOS COGNOSCERE DEBES
NOMINA QUISQUE PETRI PARITER PAULIQUE REQUIRIS.
DISCIPULOS ORIENS MISIT, QUOD SPONTE FATEMUR,
SANGUINIS OB MERITUM CHRISTUM QUI PER ASTRA SECUTI
AETHERIOS PETIERE SINUS, REGNAQUE PIORUM,
ROMA SUOS POTIUS MERUIT DEFENDERE CIVES.
HAEC DAMASUS VESTRAS REFERAT NOVA SIDERA LAUDES.[1]

When St. Damasus wrote 'the East sent the disciples' he merely meant that they were eastern in origin, but had acquired Roman citizenship by their death. So again, when he used the word *defendere* he only meant it in its legal sense, 'to claim'. But later writers misunderstood both terms, and so we get the stories, even in the letters of St. Gregory, of an expedition from the east to seize the relics, of a great fight, and of an eventual victory by the Romans and the deposition of the bodies at the Catacombs. These stories we may discount to a considerable extent. What is probably true is that the Jewish Christians wanted to carry off the bodies for burial at Jerusalem—just as a hundred years later St. Polycarp was taken back to Smyrna—but that the Roman Christians insisted on retaining them. A desire to take the bodies to Jerusalem was natural enough at that moment. Jerusalem was in the hands of the Nationalist

[1] 'Here you should know that Saints once dwelt. You who are seeking the names of Peter and of Paul. The East sent the disciples, that we grant willingly. But Rome has the right to claim them as her citizens on account of the merit of the blood they shed when they followed Christ through the stars and sought the heavenly shores and the realms of the faithful. Let Damasus tell your praises, O ye new constellations!'

Jews and extravagant hopes of casting off the Roman yoke were indulged in. The Holy Sepulchre was still in Christian hands. No one could foresee what was going to happen there only a year later. After that date no Jewish Christian would ever again have wished to carry the relics to a place so desecrated and destroyed.

There is one more early document we have to consider. It is a statement to be found in the *Liber Pontificalis* under the life of Pope Cornelius, who reigned 251–2.

'This man when he was Pope, at the request of a certain matron Lucina, took up (*levavit*) the bodies of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul by night from the Catacombs. The body of St. Paul was taken first by blessed Lucina and placed in a plot of ground which belonged to her (*in praedio suo*) on the Ostian Way, near the place where he was beheaded. Then blessed Cornelius the Bishop took the body of blessed Peter and placed it near the place where he was crucified, among the bodies of the holy Bishops in the Temple of Apollo on the Vatican at the Palace of Nero.'[1]

It is one of the few points on which all critics are unanimous that this statement does not belong to the time of Cornelius at all, but that it has been misplaced and should be put elsewhere. Oddly enough, while they have differed widely as to what its proper place may be, it does not seem to have occurred to any one that it really belongs to the time of the martyrdom and not to any later date. All that need be done is to leave out the title of the Pope, doubtless supplied to fit it for being placed in the story of his life, and also the mention of the graves of the other Bishops, which graves only came into existence later. Then Cornelius will

[1] *Lib. Pont.*, ed. Duchesne, pp. 64–5.

be seen to be very probably Cornelius Pudens, the owner perhaps of the place then known as *ad Catacumbas*, and the difficulty of imagining a second Lucina besides the one who traditionally originally buried St. Paul is done away with.

Putting these four documents together—this passage, the *Acta*, the poem of St. Damasus, and the letter of St. Gregory—we get a single and consistent story which involves no kind of improbability. The bodies of the Saints were obtained from the executioners; the desire of the Jewish Christians to take them to Jerusalem was overruled; they were taken to the place where they had been living, *ad Catacumbas* on the Appian Way, and there they were given a temporary burial. A year and seven months afterwards their permanent tombs were ready and it was possible to remove them. The removal took place by night in accordance with Roman law. But the first and merely temporary place of burial was at the Catacombs. With anything which may have happened afterwards, in the year 258 or at any other time, we need not concern ourselves at present.

3

Since, in spite of the way in which all the old traditions have been lately thrown over, and although after the most extensive and elaborate excavations no second monument has been found sufficient to justify such a change in opinion, there is still no kind of final agreement among the archaeologists themselves, but only far worse confusion than before, it seems allowable to offer a new study of the subject. A fresh mind coming to the consideration of questions on which so much

argument has been expended may sometimes be able to render assistance, even when not equipped with all the learning and experience of those who have gone before him. It may be that these have been handicapped by the very extent of their knowledge and have been 'unable to see the wood on account of the trees'.

For 300 years men have been arguing about the traditions connected with the spot *ad Catacumbas*,[1] and the supposed hiding in that place of the bodies of the Apostles in the times of persecution. Some have held that this must have happened once; some have maintained that it happened twice. A very large number of books and pamphlets have been written on the subject but scarcely any two of the eminent and learned writers are agreed as to what really did happen. Only to one or two has it occurred that all such argument is really out of place, that no translation of the bodies when once they had been committed to their final sepulture was permissible by Roman law except under most grievous penalties, and that therefore every other possible line of explanation should be exhausted before resort is made to so desperate an expedient as that of supposing a secret and illegal translation to have taken place. In this case, too, it is not a matter of a single translation, such as might conceivably have been attempted under some urgent necessity of saving the sacred relics, but a translation of two bodies from two separate tombs and then bringing them back again,

[1] *Ad Catacumbas*, 'In the Hollows'. It is most important that the reader should remember that this term 'Catacomb' originally applied only to one place, where now is the so-called Platonia, adjoining the Church of San Sebastiano on the Appian Way. It was only in the Middle Ages that the term 'Catacomb' began to be applied generally, as it is now, to all the underground cemeteries of Rome. The original and proper name for all of these was *coemeterium*.

four translations in all; or, if it occurred on two separate occasions, no less than eight. To suppose that one of the strictest of Roman laws, involving possibly the death penalty,[1] could have been so often successfully defied, is obviously a desperate course to take, especially when there is not a shadow of evidence to be found in any early document for any translation at all, nor any evidence to suggest that the Roman authorities ever threatened at any time to violate any Christian tomb, or to desecrate any relics of a body already buried.

No people have ever been more reckless about human life than were the Romans of this period. They thought little of massacring captives when celebrating the triumph of a successful general. Nor did they think it wrong that a great lord should crucify a few hundred of his slaves because one of them was convicted of attempting to poison his master. That Christians and other outlaws should be thrown to the beasts and publicly devoured was a suitable amusement for the people, which raised no protests from any one. And as they were thus careless of human life so also were they indifferent as to what happened to the dead body. These might be cast to the dogs, exposed to the vultures, or thrown naked into the great pits on the Esquiline. No reverence whatever was due to the human body as such. But let a body once be buried and finally committed to the earth, then it was a very different matter. It had now become the subject of religious protection; it was the property of the *Dii*

[1] An inscription of Augustus, set up probably at Samaria in A.D. 6, shows that the death penalty was still exacted. See F. Cumont and J. Carcopino in *Revue Historique*, 1931–2, and also *Discovery*, Dec. 1932, and F. Zulueta in *Journal of Roman Studies*, Oct. 1933.

Manes, who would resent any interference. So, no matter whose body it might have been, that of a slave, a foreigner, or even an executed criminal, it was under the protection of the Pontifices, and of the Emperor himself as Pontifex Maximus, and without his leave no such body could be moved, no tomb could be opened. The place where any one, however mean in origin, had been buried was a *locus religiosus*, it could not be sold or built upon or tampered with in any way. Even in the farthest parts of the Empire, as far away as Bithynia or Palestine, it was necessary before a body could be moved from its grave, to apply to Rome and get permission from the Emperor himself as Pontifex Maximus, and no lesser authority until the time of Trajan could grant the necessary permission.[1] But there was one notable exception. A body only temporarily buried, with the intention of moving it soon to another tomb, was not held to have passed as yet under the care of the gods, had no definite religious protection, and could generally be translated to its final resting place without any special permission having to be obtained.

As the matter is of primary importance in this investigation it will be well to state clearly the provisions of Roman law which bear upon the question. We must in the first place distinguish clearly between the criminal offence and the merely civil action. The crime was a matter of religion, under the *pontifices* and going back to the very earliest times. The civil action was a mere matter of legal damages payable for the

[1] For the Roman laws on this subject see *Digest.* xlvii. 12. 3–12, and Lübbert, *Commentationes Pontificales* (Berlin, 1859), pp. 54–8. Cf. also H. Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des Martyrs*, p. 61, and Lanciani, *Wanderings through Ancient Roman Churches*, pp. 90 seq.

injury done to the representatives of the family when a tomb was damaged, and was regulated by the Praetor's Edicts. The crime, on the other hand, might involve severe punishment and even the death penalty.

The law concerning the criminal act is thus stated by Dr. W. A. Hunter (*Roman Law* (1897), p. 316):

'It included any act that prevented the proper sepulture of the dead (*Dig.* xlvii. 12. 8); obliterating inscriptions, overthrowing a statue or column, carrying away a portion of the tomb (c. 9. 19. 1) or despoiling the dead bodies. If the offence were committed by force, the punishment was death; if without, condemnation to the mines (*Dig.* xlvii. 12. 3, 7). Death was also the punishment for removing the bodies or bones of the dead (*Dig.* xlvii. 12. 11).'

4

Why the bodies should have been taken *ad Catacumbas* seems clear enough. The Apostles had been living there before, and when the bodies had been claimed from the executioners,[1] it was only natural that they should be brought back to the place of their abode. So it was in the Platonia, only a few yards away, that they were now laid, if tradition may be trusted, and it is clearly to the Platonia that we must now betake ourselves.

The place is consecrated by the unbroken traditions of 1,500 years and by the prayers and visits of numbers of the saints. It is not a memory to be lightly thrown away unless we are actually forced to abandon it by contrary evidence. The excavations made at various times by the Pontifical Commission, the last of which were carried out by their kindness at my request only

[1] *Digest.* xlviii. 24. 2: 'Corpora animadversorum quibuslibet petentibus ad sepulturam danda sunt.'

in the March of 1930, make it possible for us to reconstruct the appearance of the spot in the first century with some approach to certainty. These excavations began in 1892, when permission was given to Mgr de Waal and other German archaeologists to excavate in the Platonia.[1] They were quite incredulous as to any connexion of the place with the Apostolic age, but were looking for some discoveries which would throw light on the mysterious date 258, the consular date *Tusco et Basso*, noted for 29 June in the Philocalian Calendar, which they believed to be that of a translation of the bodies of the Apostles to this place.

Digging down on the straight side of the semicircle they found a wall with two pilasters, undoubtedly of the first century, and of very excellent workmanship. Below this were four steps going down towards the monument, and finally a floor paved with large stones, obviously originally out of doors. It could not be a street because of the level, and must have been an enclosed yard. Round this yard are now sepulchral niches, of which we will speak later, and the area of the yard is now that of the Platonia, on the higher level.

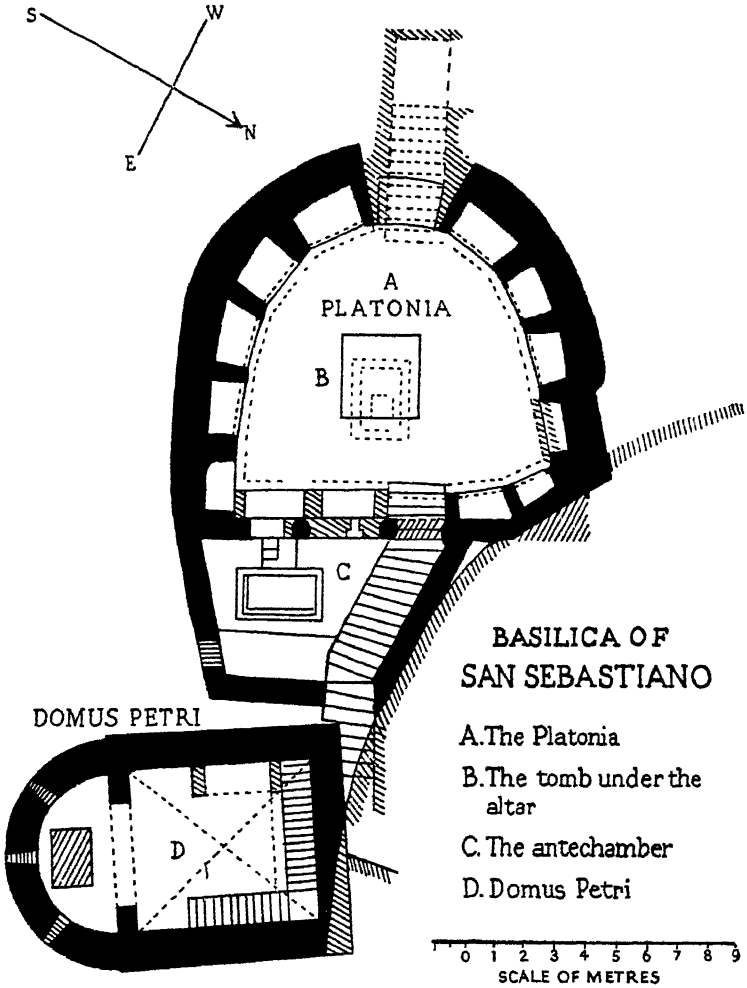
Clearly this was a find of the highest importance. They were excavating a site traditionally connected with the Apostles, and they came across remains which no one doubted to be of the Apostolic age, Neronian work of the best kind. Later excavations made in 1915 have shown that all this was only part of an extensive Roman villa of some importance and much luxury, the greater part of which was placed at a higher level.

[1] See especially Mgr de Waal's account of the excavations in *Atti della Pont. Acad. di Arch. cr.*, 1892, and Armellini, *Antichi Cimiteri crist.*, p. 745.

But the room which gave on to this yard was no mere basement, but was paved with a beautiful mosaic in green and white, part of which still remains. Such a room would not have looked on to a mere back yard, and probably the sunk area was used as a sunk garden for delicate plants; a *nymphaeum* perhaps with a fountain, a cool retreat in sultry weather.

In the middle of the yard, sunk through the pavement to the depth of about 2 feet, is the monument which is alleged to have been the resting-place of the Apostles. How did it come to be in the middle of the yard or garden of a Roman villa of the first century, and what is its own date and history?

One would have thought that such discoveries as these, on such a site, would have amply satisfied the searchers. But on Mgr de Waal and his fellow workers they seem to have made no impression. Their minds were full of the date A.D. 258, they were looking for remains of the third century, and all these remarkable discoveries were passed by as unimportant. They went on to look elsewhere. We will now, therefore, endeavour to do what they omitted to do, and try to reconstruct the conditions as they were in the first century, basing ourselves on the published results of these excavations. There was a large villa, still remaining and in good preservation, under the present Church of San Sebastiano. A lower room of that house, still in existence, with a mosaic pavement of some beauty, a room therefore of some importance, looked out on to a small sunk garden, like a chalk-pit, which was formed by one of the depressions of volcanic origin which are common thereabouts and are no doubt the source of the name *ad Catacumbas*, 'In the hollows'. This sunk



PLAN SHOWING THE RELATION OF THE PLATONIA AND DOMUS PETRI TO THE BASILICA OF SAN SEBASTIANO

NOTE.—*Both the Platonia and the Domus Petri stand at a much lower level than the Church itself*

garden was about 50 feet in diameter, more or less circular, except on the side of the house, and enclosed by the natural tufa rock about 12 feet in height. The garden was paved with stones which are still there. Four steps, also still there, led down from the room into the garden. In the centre of the garden a space has been excavated below the pavement some 9 feet square and about 2 feet in depth. All round, doubtless, were flowers and creepers. It was traditionally in that space excavated in the centre that the bodies of the Apostles were laid as a temporary expedient when the Roman Christians rescued them from their Jewish fellow believers, nor does there seem to be any valid reason why the tradition should not be accepted.

The bodies could not be buried permanently in that spot, because Roman law forbade interment in any house or in any place that adjoined a house.[1] The time during which they remained there seems to be preserved for us in the apocryphal 'Acts' of St. Peter, which gives it as 'one year and seven months'. The exactness of the period leads one to believe that we may have here a genuine tradition, as a round number like forty years would not. The conditions were difficult until after Nero's death a year later, and if the period seems long, one may reflect that the body of Pope Pius IX, in much less unquiet times, had to be retained in St. Peter's for very many years before he could be carried to his final resting-place in S. Lorenzo.

It may even be that we can recover the actual dates on which the bodies were respectively removed to their final tombs when these were at last ready. In the

[1] *Paul.*, i. 21. 12; *Digest.* xlvii. 12. 3.

earliest calendars the date of 22 February, which we now keep as the feast of St. Peter's Chair at Antioch, appears as *Depositio Petri*. In the same way the feast of 25 January, now kept as the Conversion of St. Paul, is sometimes *Depositio Pauli*.[1] The dates fit exactly with the year and seven months of the *Acta* and also with the misplaced entry in the *Liber Pontificalis*, under Pope Cornelius, where we are told how Blessed Lucina first took (? 25 Jan. 69) the body of St. Paul and buried it as her own property on the Ostian Way, and then, a little later, how Cornelius (? Pudens) took the body of St. Peter and buried it (?22 Feb. 69) on the Vatican. The apocryphal 'Acts' say that these burials were carried out with considerable ceremony (*cum gloria hymnorum*). At first sight this seems impossible, but it may be a genuine tradition. For Roman law lays it down explicitly that bodies thus transferred after a lapse of time to their permanent graves must have free right of passage even through towns.[2] It was a moment when the reaction in favour of the Christians, immediately after the death of Nero, was in full vigour, and Christians, though still technically liable to prosecution, were in practice being treated once more as being under the protection of the *religio licita* of Judaism. At a much later date, when persecution was in full force and access to the cemeteries was forbidden, it is recorded that the body of St. Cyprian was nevertheless carried 'with lights and singing and great triumph' to his sepulchre. So strange to our thinking was the

[1] Or *Translatio S. Pauli*, as in the Hieronymian Martyrology. On this see J. P. Kirsch, *Der stadtröm. christl. Festkalendar* (1924), and H. Lietzmann, *Petrus und Paulus in Rom*, pp. 73, 75, 101; also J. P. Kirsch in *Rivista di arch. crist.* (1925). The evidence is slight, but suggestive.

[2] H. J. Roby, *Roman Private Law*, p. 391.

Roman mind in its carelessness for life or for the dead, and yet in its intense reverence for the ceremonies and surroundings of an actual burial.

5

THE MEMORIA OF ANACLETUS

After their bodies had been removed one can easily understand that the spot where the Apostles had lived during those last two difficult years of hiding, and where they had so long lain side by side in burial, would have been very dear to the heart of every Roman Christian. One naturally asks whether any steps were taken to mark the spot and make it worthy of its tremendous memories. It is a question which can only be answered by a careful examination of the Platonia itself. Most of the changes which have taken place there are undoubtedly of the fourth century. There Mgr de Waal and his collaborators were certainly right. The whole of the upper part of the building we have to-day seems to be of that date; a date later than that of the building of the Basilica. The raising of the floor level, and the construction of the sepulchral chamber under the altar, took place at the same period. These later changes will come to be considered in due course. There remain two additions to the original surroundings, and two only, which seem to go back to a much earlier period. The original excavation in the middle of the garden had been lined with the marble slabs which are still there, forming the famous *bisomo* or double tomb, over which the sepulchral chamber has been built, and then, by the construction all round of a series of arches, the whole little yard or garden had been made into a really important sepulchral monument.

We will deal first with this marble tomb in the centre. The slabs which form this were once, apparently, open to all to see, though nowadays one cannot see them without the difficult feat of passing through a small aperture in the back of the altar and lowering oneself down. There are two slabs which form the floor, each about 8 feet by 4, two long slabs which form the sides and are the same size, and one more placed on edge in order to divide the space into two and make a double tomb or cenotaph. Four smaller slabs close in the ends of the tombs. Apparently there have never been any covering slabs. These marble slabs would have risen some 2 feet above the paved level, and to prevent this the whole space would seem to have been filled in with earth up to this height, covering up three of the four steps which led down from the room. This room was apparently now utilized as an antechamber and the three arches still there were built to make the communication. The little garden seems not to have been roofed over at this time and the marble *bisomo*, drained by holes in one of the bottom slabs, was open and visible to all, in the centre. Hence it was that the place seems to have acquired the name it has retained ever since, Platonia, 'The Marble Tomb'.

Round the sides of the sunk garden, against the rough containing wall, were next erected twelve sepulchral arched niches, the base of each 2 feet above the new level, and each about 6 feet in width and 7 feet in height. They are slightly irregular in size but the whole was once covered with coloured stucco work of the finest quality, a little of which still remains. On the date to which we assign this stucco work depends

that of the whole arrangement we have described, and the point is one, therefore, of great importance. Professor Armellini, than whom few were more capable of judging, thought that the work was 'of the best period of the Empire'. De Rossi's opinion was as follows: 'above all, this stucco work seems to me to show strong evidence of the highest antiquity. It has no true likeness to the usual decorations of the sepulchral chambers, but is closely related to those of the columbaria and of pagan sepulchral cells.'[1] At a later period, when others were trying to assign a fourth-century date to these *stucchi*, he gave his considered opinion in almost the last words he ever wrote for publication, that 'the figures and cornices in stucco which form the decoration of these arches are utterly different from the works of Christian art which belong to the time of St. Damasus. The most recent period to which I can assign them would be the beginning of the third century.'[2]

Duchesne wrote of this spot that 'its decoration indicates an antiquity relatively very high, an origin far anterior to the persecution of Valerian' (A.D. 258).[3] Lanciani, again, was of the same opinion and thought that the decorations belonged to a period before the spot came into Christian hands. Altogether the character of these *stucchi*; the absence of any kind of Christian symbol—the only recognizable figure being apparently one of Aesculapius, the Healer, one of the few pagan symbols which was occasionally in the earliest times invested with a Christian meaning—are most suitable to a date in the latter part of the first century. So important a monument, if it be really Christian in origin at

[1] *Roma Sott.*, i. 188. [2] *Ibid.* 193, n. 2. [3] *Lib. Pont.* cvii.

all, could scarcely have been raised in Rome at any period, except only in the years of comparative peace which intervened between the death of Nero and the next outbreak of persecution under Domitian at the end of the first century.

Against these considerations Mgr de Waal and his German collaborators, who wished to prove the whole building to be of the fourth or fifth century and connected only with St. Quirinus, argued that the very rough wall at the back of these arches, against which they are built, was itself not earlier than the third century and that therefore the arches, in spite of their decoration, must be later still. But this is false archaeology altogether. A rough wall built only to hold back earth can never be dated with any sort of accuracy except by some means of dating the material employed. The method of building such walls is the same in all ages. To date good work by bad is against all sound principles of archaeology. Rough work can be done at any time and varies very little from age to age. But fine and artistic work can generally be dated with some accuracy. Professor Marucchi, recognizing that the character of these *stucchi* is undoubtedly extremely early,[1] attempted to get over the difficulty by suggesting that possibly moulds might have been preserved for two or three centuries and again brought into use. This fantastic idea was at once answered by Armellini with a severity which does not seem unwarranted: 'This suggestion is not only gratuitous but in the case before us hardly seems serious.'[2] Of the whole attempt

[1] Even Mgr de Waal himself admits that 'they seem to be of the third or second century and many have judged them to be even earlier' (*Atti.* 1892, p. 149).

[2] Armellini, *Antichi Cimiteri crist.* (ed. 1893), p. 754.

to date these *stucchi* in the fourth or fifth century, he wrote even more severely:

'All those who really understand art, every skilled eye, has heretofore judged them to be of the best period. . . . It is now desired to attribute them even to the fourth or fifth century, trampling on every elementary criterion of art and archaeology. Such a judgement, the consequence as it is of ideas that are preconceived, corresponds with no canon hitherto accepted, is not serious, and is actually discreditable to the science of archaeology.'[1]

It will hardly be denied that the authority of G. B. de Rossi, of Armellini, Duchesne, and Lanciani is, on a subject of this kind, very greatly superior to that of Mgr de Waal or of any of his collaborators, and even perhaps to that of Professor Marucchi. If we conclude, therefore, that the date of this work may be anything from the latter part of the first century onwards we have good support. If this is a Christian monument at all, it is far easier on historical grounds to assign such a work to a date before the end of the first century, than to any later time. 'From the time of the Apostles to the first persecution of Domitian,' writes Professor Lanciani, 'Christian tombs, whether above or below ground, were built with perfect impunity and in defiance of public opinion.'[2] This was never again possible until the time of Constantine.

We have, then, as the first development of the Platonia a structure possibly as early as the end of the first century, forming, as Professor Marucchi has said, 'a monument of exceptional grandeur as a sepulchral edifice, surrounded by twelve niches circling round this

[1] Armellini, *Antichi Cimiteri crist.*, p. 751.
[2] Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, p. 315.

double tomb with its lining of marble, and making a crown for that monument'.[1] Each of these niches was built for the purpose of sepulture and contained two tombs ready and prepared for the bodies of the distinguished dead who should be brought there later—thought worthy to be laid in so remarkable a relation to the central and apostolic monument. These tombs appear, according to Mgr de Waal, who is the only one who had the opportunity of examining them carefully, to be necessarily of the same date as the arches in which they are placed, because in one of these the construction of the arch rests upon one of the tombs. They are all of the same singular construction 'humped, and with an opening for communication at one end. Any one can see that these tombs are built on the model of the apostolic tombs'.[2]

If the excavators of 1892, having come already to these conclusions, had not had their minds occupied so exclusively with the date 258, but had paused to consider the real bearings of the discoveries they had made, they could hardly have failed to recall to their minds the description in the *Liber Pontificalis* of a certain important structure of the first century, also closely connected with the Apostles, of which very little is known. We mean the Memoria of Anacletus. The dates of the earliest Popes are somewhat uncertain, and the personality and date of Anacletus present more difficulty than any, but his date is certainly not later than A.D. 90. The text of his life in the *Liber Pontificalis* is corrupt, but in the judgement of Mgr

[1] *Nuovo Bull. di arch. crist.*, 1903.

[2] De Waal, *Atti della Pont. Acad. di Arch. cr.*, Series II, vol. iv, p. 148.

Duchesne the passage with which we are concerned originally ran as follows:

'Hic memoriam beati Petri construxit et composuit, dum presbyter factus fuisset a beato Petro; ubi episcopi recondererentur, ubi tamen et ipse sepultus est.[1]

A later hand has added the words 'juxta corpus beati Petri'.

All the rest of the immediate successors of St. Peter, with the sole exceptions of St. Clement and St. Alexander, are noted as being buried 'next to St. Peter's body'. Anacletus is noted only, in the original text, as being buried in the Memoria he had built.[2] Probably because of these words added later, which got into the received text, every one has always assumed that this Memoria was at the Vatican, but there is no other evidence for this. The record certainly fits much better with this place. Here we have the *bisomo* or double tomb as the actual Memoria or Cenotaph. We have the twelve sepulchral niches, built on purpose for burials, surrounding it. It is natural to ask, with all due reservation, whether we may not have here the original Memoria of Anacletus, the position of which has been lost sight of during the ages. The coincidences are so marked and the apparent date of the structure so suitable, that the hypothesis seems worthy of careful consideration by Roman archaeologists. If the identification can be accepted it would seem to be of considerable importance.

[1] *Lib. Pont.* in loco; cf. notes. 'He built and arranged the Memoria of Blessed Peter, for he had been ordained by him, so that the Bishops might be buried there, and he was also buried there himself.'

[2] There is still to be seen in that room of the villa which is adjacent to the *Platonia* a large early tomb and empty sarcophagus which may be that of Anacletus.

6

Whether or not this monument which we have described suffered in any way in the times of the persecution we cannot tell. It seems that by Roman law at this date a cenotaph enjoyed the same protection as an actual tomb.[1] Tombs such as the sepulchral chambers of the Acilii Glabriones at Sta Priscilla and of the Flavii at Sta Domitilla were in no way injured, and it may be that the Platonia also enjoyed the same immunity. In any case it must have still been by far the most important monument of Christian Rome, excepting only the Apostolic tombs themselves, when peace at last came to the Church. And then, we can scarcely doubt, the spot was visited and revered by no less a personage than the Emperor Constantine himself.

Is it fanciful to think that when the Holy Sepulchre itself was uncovered at Jerusalem and the Church of the Anastasis was built, it was the Platonia that the Emperor had in mind as a model for the structure he erected? For the two plans are almost identical, though the miserable state to which the Platonia has now been reduced makes the comparison seem almost ludicrous. Constantine cut away the rock round the Holy Sepulchre until he left it standing an isolated monument in the centre of a semicircular church, the Hemisphaerium as Eusebius calls it. There too the central monument was surrounded by twelve arches supported by columns 'of great size' in honour of the Apostles, and there too the structure was roofless and open to the sky. The Church of the Ascension on the

[1] H. J. Roby, *Roman Private Law*, p. 391.

Mount of Olives followed the same general idea, though it was completely circular in form. Indeed, Constantine seems to have been haunted by the number twelve and the idea of doing honour to the Apostles. The mausoleum of Sta Constanza, where his sister was buried, was again surrounded by twelve columns, and the same seems to have been the case with the mausoleum of his mother, St. Helena, *inter duas lauros*, on the Via Labicana. All these were circular churches. But the most remarkable instance, and the one which recalls the Platonia most of all, was the Apostoleion at Constantinople, which he prepared for his own burial. Here, ranged round his tomb, were 'twelve sepulchres in the shape of sacred *stelae*, in memory and in honour of the choir of the twelve Apostles' (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, iv. 60). The number twelve is not natural in such a case: the natural number is eight, or sixteen, and these latter numbers are almost universal in other circular edifices. The number twelve is, however, carefully preserved in many of the reproductions of the Holy Sepulchre which were built later in Europe, especially the very remarkable one at Bologna, which dates from the fifth century, and the similar thirteenth-century reproduction at La Vera Cruz, at Segovia in Spain. So also the whole scheme of the Temple Church in London is dependent upon the twelve columns round the circumference. The same was true of the Temple at Paris, and of all the more important edifices that were built under the auspices of the Order of the Templars. It may be nothing more than an ingenious suggestion that this singularly persistent desire to reproduce the twelve arches in Christian architecture was due originally to the Platonia, but

at least it is true that this edifice, now so discredited and neglected, is the first instance known to us in which this form of construction, twelve arches in honour of the twelve Apostles, was employed in any Christian building.

VI

TUSCO ET BASSO CONSULIBUS

THERE can be but few instances in which so vast a superstructure of conjecture has been built upon but four words—words unconnected with anything that precedes or follows them, and unsupported by any kind of confirmatory evidence from any other source—as has been the case with these. In themselves they represent nothing but a date, stated after the somewhat cumbrous Roman fashion; in this case the date of A.D. 258. They occur in the entry for 29 June in the oldest Christian calendar we possess—the *Depositio Martyrum*: a list of the burial days of Roman martyrs, with no variant reading in any copy. The whole entry runs thus: *III. Kal. Jul. Petri in Catacumbas, et Pauli Ostiense. Tusco et Basso Cons.* There is nothing to show what may be the connexion with the Apostles of this date of 258, nor any explanation of any kind to account for the presence of these words.

The document in which the list in question is contained, the famous so-called 'Chronograph of 354', has been edited several times: by Theodor Mommsen,[1] by Louis Duchesne,[2] and by Josef Strzigowski.[3] All these eminent authorities, and a multitude of others who have followed in their footsteps, are agreed that this date occurring in this particular position can only denote a translation of the bodies of the two Apostles from their own tombs to the Catacombs, supposed to have been undertaken in 258 because of the violence of the

[1] *Mon. Germ. Hist. Auct. Antiquiss.*, tom ix, p. 13 seq.
[2] *Lib. Pont.* i. vi seq.; cf. *Acta SS. Nov.* ii.
[3] In *Jahrbuch des kais. deutschen arch. Inst.* Berlin, 1888.

Valerian persecution, which had given rise to a fear of desecration. For such a 'translation' in 258 there is not a shadow of supporting evidence, though there is of course a very early tradition that at some period the bodies of the Apostles did lie at the Platonia. Nevertheless, the view has been adopted without question by practically every writer on the Apostolic age for the last forty years and has been pressed to include even more than would at first sight seem to be involved. June 29 is now looked upon by many as commemorating nothing but this 'translation'; the day and year of the martyrdom are regarded as quite unknown, and the tradition that both Apostles suffered on one day is similarly discredited. So widely spread is this deduction that even the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, in an article on St. Peter, written by Mgr Kirsch, takes all this for granted and beyond criticism.

Nor have the archaeologists been behind the historians in their eager acceptance of the new teaching. The Pontifical Commission, in this matter represented almost exclusively by the German archaeologists of the Campo Santo, threw itself with avidity into the search for the imaginary Apostolic hiding-place. They dug the Platonia from end to end, and finding nothing that suggested the date of 258, threw it aside, desecrated and untidy as it still remains, caring nothing for its 1,500 years of undisputed traditional sanctity. Then they turned with undiminished zeal to do the same for the Church of San Sebastiano. There, by a fortunate chance, their researches were rewarded by important discoveries, but not by the discovery of the hiding-place they sought. The 'translation' of 258 still remained unproved, and is of course unprovable.

Meanwhile, on the other side, two voices, and two only of the first rank, were raised in expostulation. Père Delehaye, the head of the Bollandists, pointed out that any such 'translation' was absolutely forbidden by Roman law and that there could have been no cause for anxiety since under that law the bodies of the martyrs had always rested in absolute security.

'Défense de troubler le repos d'un mort, ne fût ce qu'en deplaçant son sarcophage; défense surtout de porter sur ses restes un main sacrilège. Un fois donc que le tombeau s'était renfermé sur le corps d'un martyr il ne devait plus y avoir nul danger de profanation d'aucune sorte.'[1]

Professor Rodolfo Lanciani, too, brought all the weight of his knowledge of Rome and of Roman law to bear on the same side. He pointed out that the removal of a body, without the leave of the Emperor himself as Pontifex Maximus, was a capital offence by Roman law; that not one but four such translations would have been necessary in the case supposed; that a Roman police station actually adjoined the Catacombs at San Sebastiano, and that there was not a single instance on record in which the Roman authorities had interfered with a body once buried.[2] His words had no more effect than those of Père Delehaye, and all went on and still goes on as if neither had ever written at all. The alternative suggestion which the Bollandists favour, which is that the date commemorates a celebration at the Catacombs which originated in that year, is itself also very unsatisfying.

To some of us it has seemed for some years past that the whole body of teaching founded upon this date of

[1] *Les origines du culte des Martyrs*, p. 61.
[2] In *Atti della Pont. Acad. di Arch. cr.* 19.

258, in spite of its universal acceptance, was much like a pyramid balanced in unstable equilibrium upon its point. It remains for us now to inquire whether it really has any solid ground at all on which that point can base itself and rest secure.

The actual *Depositio Martyrum*, or list of the dates and places of the burials of Roman martyrs, forms but a single folio of the whole volume in which it is contained. It is a volume of extraordinary interest; a kind of *Whittaker's Almanack* of the fourth century; a compilation from the State records of information likely to be required by a man holding public office; with a full pagan calendar for the year and a small Christian supplement at the end. It has the appearance of a presentation copy, and was sumptuously illustrated with a frontispiece and thirty full-page plates by no less a person than Dionysius Furius Philocalus, the friend and secretary of Pope Damasus. The donor, we may shrewdly suspect, was no other than Damasus himself, who in 354, though he was not yet Pope, was already the most prominent ecclesiastic in Rome; such a compilation of memoranda would appeal to him more than to most. The recipient was one Valentinus, apparently, from such hints as we can gather from the book itself, a recent convert of importance, and one destined for high position in the State. Mommsen has identified him with much probability with one of that name who, after serving the office of tribune and possibly other offices in Rome, was, in 359, appointed 'Dux' in Illyricum, and afterwards was 'Consularis', or 'Governor', of the Italian Province of Picenum. As in that period the service of the State had become an organized profession and men passed continuously

from one appointment to another, we may surmise that other positions besides these were occupied by him at other times. Perhaps further research might reveal some of them. Meanwhile one can only guess from the internal evidence.

The date of the compilation can be fixed accurately to 354. Its contents, so far as they come from the public records, are uniformly brought up to that date. Moreover, it contains the portraits of the reigning Emperor Constantius II, and of his cousin and heir presumptive, Gallus Caesar. But Gallus was in disgrace and was beheaded before the year was out. The book was perhaps a New Year's gift for 354. It cannot well be later.

Almost the whole is of a purely pagan character. The only hint, until we come to the Christian supplement, that paganism was no longer in sole command, is to be found on the title-page and dedication, *Valentine gaudeas in Deo*. But for that single word, *Deo*, one might think that the book was a wholly pagan volume. Even the illustrations of Philocalus are absolutely pagan in character. Scarcely a single Christian allusion, or a single detail that suggests Christianity is anywhere to be found. Yet it is undoubtedly a Christian volume; its date is some forty years after the Constantinian settlement of religion, and it is the Pope's own friend and secretary who has arranged it all. The practical force of paganism and of pagan ideas in art was evidently still very strong in 354. Though the Emperor was Christian the Senate and the great majority of Roman society was almost wholly pagan.

These illustrations are of very great interest. We, of course, are not in possession of the originals, but only of sixteenth-century copies of an eighth-century manu-

FRONTISPIECE OF THE VOLUME WHICH CONTAINS THE 'DEPOSITIO MARTYRUM'

script which, in turn, was itself probably copied direct from the original. But the copies seem to be well done and keep the classical style of the work unchanged. We cannot spend much space on them here, full of interest as they are. They begin with allegorical figures representing the four great cities of the Empire: Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Treves. Rome is a seated female figure, helmeted and plumed, with a figure of victory standing on the outstretched right hand, and a spear in the left. A nude boy in front scatters coins from a jar on his shoulder.

The four cities are followed by a figure of Victory, holding a tablet on which is inscribed *Salvis Augustis, Felix Valentinus*. This seems to suggest that Valentinus had some share in the recent victory over Magnentius, which had left Constantius master of the world.

There follow the *Natales Caesarum*, the birthdays of all the Emperors down to the reigning Constantius II, and this again is followed by the days of the week, Saturn, Mars, Mercury, Sol, Luna, in that order. Jupiter and Venus are missing. Each day has the picture of its patronal deity, and each has also apothegms, startlingly suggestive of more recent and much less dignified calendars, giving advice and promising good or bad fortune for those born on that day. Thursday, for instance, is a good day for asking favours or sending in bills. People who fall ill on that day will recover. Thieves who choose that day will be detected. Friday is the right day for whipping the children, as at Eton a thousand years later.

The months follow—again wholly pagan in character. January, for instance, is represented by an Augur taking the *haruspicia*; November by a completely bald

priest of Isis charming a snake. The actual calendars of the months have survived completely only in one manuscript. They give the various Ludi and other festivals of the month, but nothing Christian. The Dominical letters, just as in our own calendars, are followed in a second column by the eight-day letters of the *Nundinae* or market days, running from A to H.

After the illustrated parts come the more practical features of the volume. There is a list, which must have been exceedingly useful when the only way of designating a year was to give the names of those who had then held office as Consuls, for it gives the names of all the Consuls for every year from A.U.C. 245 to A.D. 354—a period of over 850 years. The years after A.U.C. 753 *Caesare et Paulo Cons.* are reckoned *post-Christum* and there is the note *hoc cons. dominus Jesus Christus natus est VIII. Kal. Jan.* Of course, this date of 25 December may have been added later, even if the fixation of the year formed part of the original and goes back behind 354. There are further notes under some later years. The death of Our Lord is placed under the two Gemini, A.D. 29. Peter and Paul are said to have come to Rome *agere episcopatum* in 33 and to have suffered martyrdom in 55, *III. Kal. Jul.*—this last date is, of course, due to a false calculation. The 'twenty-five years of Peter' have been reckoned as dating from the Ascension, not merely for his connexion with Rome. The date of 33 for both Apostles coming to Rome to begin their episcopate is difficult to explain and of course hopelessly wrong.[1] But, since so many of the

[1] It is perhaps worth noting that under the heading of *Consularia Italica* in the same volume the coming of St. Peter to Rome is given as Tiberio IV et Gallo, i.e. 42, which is the date given by St. Jerome and widely accepted.

learned of recent years have been insisting that 29 June must be the date only of the imaginary 'translation', and that it has nothing to do with the death of the Apostles, one would like to ask how they explain this very plain statement of the opposite in the same document on which they base their new theories—'*Passi sunt Petrus et Paulus III. Kal. Iul.*'

Lastly, to conclude the non-Christian portion, we have a list of the *Praefecti Urbi Romae*, the chief magistrates of the city itself, with their year of office marked both by the year *post-Christum*, and also by the Consuls. This list begins in 254 and ends in A.D. 354. There is nothing in it which is of any special interest for our present purpose, though it should be of considerable value for the critics of the 'Acts' of the Roman martyrs.

The Christian supplement is only a very small part of the whole volume. It consists of four parts, each apparently compiled from official sources. First comes the *Depositio Episcoporum*, giving the dates and places of burial of all those Bishops of Rome who were not then reckoned as martyrs, beginning with Lucius (255) and ending with Sylvester (335). Marcus and Julius, 336 and 352, have been added to the original list. The Popes before 255 are not included. Next comes *Depositio Martyrum*, a list which contains in like manner the dates and places of burial of the Roman martyrs, including those Popes who were martyred. The official list, however, from which this must have been copied, can have been by no means up to date in 354. Here we may safely follow De Rossi and Duchesne who, studying this document as one of the sources of the Hieronymian Martyrology, placed the date of the original list at 311 or 312, immediately after the peace of

the Church. The victims of the Diocletianic persecution are not included, doubtless because there had not yet been time to consider their cases and pronounce the *vindicatio* which admitted them to the altars of the Church. By 354 this list must have been very incomplete, but apparently it was the latest that Philocalus could obtain, and he has made no attempt to add the later names.

There followed next the *Paschal Cycle*, the dates of Easter for each year *post-Christum*; from 312 onwards for a century. It had been duly filled up, no doubt by Philocalus, with the names of the Consuls and the day on which Easter fell, correct up to 354. After that date the blanks which had been left to be filled with the names of the Consuls for later years have been filled up accurately for five years more, and then a gap of nine years has occurred—the list has, however, been eventually filled up, after a fashion, right up to 412, though with many blunders. It is of interest for our immediate purpose chiefly because it shows that additions were being made to the book for at least sixty years after 354, so that we cannot say with certainty that any unusual entry contained in it is necessarily of the earlier date. There follows, lastly, a list of all the Popes and a short account of their doings, *Episcopi Romani*, from St. Peter to Liberius. Each of these four headings, as well as various interpolations in other parts of the volume, is full of interest, but we cannot dwell on them as they do not directly concern the point before us.

It is on the *Depositio Martyrum* that we must concentrate our attention. This, as we have said, was originally a list of the days on which were commemorated the burial of the martyrs recognized as such in 312, and the

places in which their graves were to be found. It is a characteristic survival of pagan ideas about the relative importance of death and burial, that it was the burial and not the martyrdom that was commemorated, even in cases in which the two events were widely separated.[1] The list was intended as a guide to help pilgrims to visit the tombs, not as an official catalogue of all those who had suffered martyrdom. Only those whose tombs lay within easy reach of Rome were included, and the formula was always as concise as possible, without the use of a single unnecessary word. But although the original list must have been of this kind, it is not thus that it has come down to us. It has been altered and interpolated by later hands. Two feasts, Christmas Day and the Chair of Peter, have been inserted, though neither has anything to do with the burial of martyrs. The names of some Roman saints and martyrs, as for instance St. Cornelius, appear to have been erased. Other martyrs have been inserted who have nothing to do with Rome. Dates have been supplied in three special cases. It is clear that all these alterations must have been made at some date later than 312. The question is whether they are due to Philocalus or his employer in 354, or whether they were made by Valentinus himself or his successors at some later date. So far, no one of the editors has raised the question. Every one has assumed that the document as we have it to-day is substantially the same as when it left the hands of Philocalus. It has constantly been quoted as an official calendar of the Church of Rome of that

[1] As, for instance, St. Cornelius who suffered at Centumcellae in June, but was brought to Rome, apparently after a temporary burial, and buried in Callistus, 6 Sept. The case of St. Pontianus is similar, and of course SS. Peter and Paul.

date. Mommsen even went further and, while designating it as a 'true *Feriale* of the Church', which it certainly never was, suggested that on account of the strong African tendency it exhibits, we should add *ad usum Ecclesiae Carthaginis*. It will, however, become clear as we examine the alterations in question, that they cannot be regarded as being in any way authoritative; that not Philocalus in 354, but Valentinus at some later date, must be considered responsible for most of them; and that, so far from suggesting an official origin, they seem to be merely personal notes made at various dates in his own private almanac by one who betrays much of the zeal and all the ignorance of a very recent convert.[1]

We will begin by transcribing the whole document in the form in which it has come down to us, following the text given by Mommsen. The document is not a long one, about fifty lines in all:

DEPOSITIO MARTIRVM

VIII Kal. Jan.	Natus Christus in Bethleem Judaee.
Mense Ianuario:	
XIII Kal. Feb.	Fabiani in Callisti et Sebastiani in Catacumbas.
XII Kal. Feb.	Agnetis in Nomentana.
Mense Februario:	
VIII Kal. Martias	Natale Petri de Cathedra.
Mense Martio:	
Non. Martias	Perpetuae et Felicitatis, Africae.
Mense Maio:	
XIIII Kal. Iun.	Partheni et Caloceri in Callisti, Diocletiano VIIII et Maximiano VIII, Cons.

[1] It is perhaps worth noting that, since Pope Julius I (337–52) built the basilica of St. Valentine on the Flaminian Way, Valentinus would have been a very natural name for a convert of that period to take since St. Valentine was one of the popular saints of the moment.

Mense Iunio:

III Kal. Iul. Petri in Catacumbas
et Pauli in Ostiense, Tusco et Basso Cons.

Mense Iulio:

VI Idus Felicis et Filippi in Priscillae
et in Iordanorum Martialis, Vitalis, Alexandri,
et in Maximi Silani. Hunc Silanum Mart. Novati furati sunt.
et in Praetextatae, Januari.

III Kal. Aug. Abdon et Sennen in Pontiani, quod est ad ursum piliatum.

Mense Augusto:

VIII Idus Aug. Xysti in Callisti
et in Praetextati, Agapiti et Felicissimi.

VI Idus Aug. Secundi, Carpofori, Victorini et Severiani Albano
et Ostiense VII ballisteria Cyriaci, Largi, Crescentiani.
Memmiae, Julianetis, et Ixmaraedi.

IIII Idus Aug. Laurenti in Tiburtina.

Idus Aug. Ypoliti in Tiburtina
et Pontiani in Callisti.

XI Kal. Sept. Timotei Ostiense.

V Kal. Sept. Hermetis in Basillae, Salaria Vetere.

Mense Septembre:

Non. Sept. Aconti in Porto, et Nonni et Herculani et Taurini.

V Idus Sept. Gorgoni in Lavicana.

III Idus Sept. Proti et Iacinti, in Basillae.

XVIII Kal. Oct. Cypriani, Africae, Romae celebratur in Callisti.

X Kal. Oct. Basillae, Salaria Vetere, Diocletiano VIIII et Maximiano VIII consulibus

Mense Octobre:

Pri. Idus Oct. Callisti in Via Aurelia, miliario III.

Mense Novembre:

V Idus Nov. Clementi, Semproniani, Clavi, Nicostrati in comitatu.

III Kal. Dec. Saturnini in Trasonis.

Mense Decembre:

Idus Dec. Ariston in pontum.

That is the whole document. As we go through it, item by item, we shall get, I think, a clear conviction that most of the alterations, some of which are obvious enough, must be set down to Valentinus, and cannot possibly date back to 354, or to any purely Roman origin.

1. *Christmas Day.* It would be interesting to know that 25 December was already accepted in Rome as the birthday of Our Lord as early as 354, but it is hardly probable, and 365 would be a more likely date.

2. *VIII Kal. Mart.* (*23 Feb.*). This entry must originally have been *Petri in Cornelia*, the *Depositio*, which seems to have been its original title. It could become *de Cathedra* only after the building of the Baptistery of St. Peter's by Pope Damasus, and the transfer thither of the Chair. But this took place when Damasus was already Pope and therefore after 360. For this reason, if for no other, we may feel safe in concluding that here at any rate we have an alteration made after the volume had left the hands of Philocalus. It seems quite impossible to allow that the feast of the Chair can have taken the place of the original commemoration of the burial of St. Peter as early as 354. The day is still noted as *Depositio Petri et Pauli* by Polemius Silvius in 448, a hundred years later. The addition *et Pauli* is of course a mistake. St. Paul's burial day was 25 January, but by 448 that day was being kept as the feast of his Conversion, and Silvius had to find a place for the burial somewhere, just as we shall see Valentinus does in the document we are studying. But Silvius does not seem even to have heard of the feast of the Chair. As late as 547 there were complaints of the excesses at St. Peter's of those who kept the *refrigerium* on 22 February. But the *refrigerium*, by that time degraded into a

drunken orgy, was originally a solemn drink offering on the anniversary of a burial at a tomb. It had nothing to do with the Chair, and was probably a survival of the earlier *Depositio*, or, in this particular case, may even go back to a Pagan origin.

3. *Non. Martias.* What are Perpetua and Felicitas doing in a list of Roman martyrs? Here we have the first sign of African influence. Valentinus or some one at Carthage seems to have heard of the local martyrs and inserted them into his list. He has also struck out the Roman Felicitas on *IX Kal. Dec.*, doubtless thinking he had detected an error. He would no doubt also have struck out that much more important person, the Roman Perpetua, but she was not a martyr and so would not have been on the list.

4. *Parthenius and Calocerus* are given the date of 304 which is not theirs. They belong to the Decian persecution of 254, and the date of Diocletian IX and Maximinian VIII cannot be theirs.

5. *Petri in Catacumbas.* Here we are in the very heart of the controversy. I would suggest that the entry here was originally *Petri et Pauli in Catacumbas* or else *Petri in Catacumbas et Pauli in Catacumbas* and that it refers to the original temporary burial of the Apostles at the time of the martyrdom which is recorded in their *Acta* and again in St. Gregory's letter to Constantia. Valentinus (or possibly Philocalus) has brought *Pauli Ostiense* from 25 January, where it would have commemorated the burial of St. Paul by Lucina in his present tomb. The title of that day has gradually passed from *Depositio Pauli* in the oldest calendars through *Translatio Pauli* and *Translatio et Conversio Pauli* to its present designation of *Conversio Pauli.* The

same has been the history of St. Peter's original burial day on the Vatican, which has passed in like manner into the Feast of the Chair. As these two earlier commemorations were displaced in later calendars, they were added to the one on 29 June, until in the Berne MS. of the Hieronymian Martyrology in the fifth century, we have for that day *Petri in Vaticano, Pauli in Ostiensi utriusque in Catacumbis* and then the mysterious *Tusco et Basso Cons.* which we will leave for the present. It has been the practice of every commentator hitherto to explain the earlier and simpler entries by the later and more full. Hence has come confusion. But such a method is surely false archaeology. One should explain the later developments by the earlier and simpler statements. Do this, and all becomes clear and simple. What Valentinus seems to have done in this case is to erase *Pauli Ostiense* on 25 January and transfer it to 29 June, but not to have gone on to enter the Conversion in its place.

6. *VI Idus Iul.* 'The party of Novatus stole the body of Sylvanus.' Here, again, we seem to find Valentinus at Carthage. The Roman Silvanus was never disturbed. His body was still in its original tomb in the sixth century and later. Novatus, too, was of Carthage, not of Rome. Valentinus seems to have heard some story, not elsewhere recorded, of Silvanus the martyr of Carthage, whose day is 8 March, and, unable as usual to conceive of two martyrs of the same name, has tacked on the story to Silvanus of Rome.

7. *V Idus Sept. Gorgonii.* When he was commanding in Illyria with his head-quarters at Sirmium, where the Emperor's palace was situated, and where during those years the Emperor himself was constantly in

residence, Valentinus heard, no doubt, the story of Gorgonius of Nicomedia, Diocletian's chief chamberlain, who was martyred on 11 March 304. His body was attached to a stone and thrown into the sea. A little later than 354, men in Rome were telling how the stone had floated and miraculously brought the body to Rome, where somehow or other it got into the tomb of Gorgonius of Rome.[1] Valentinus seems to have left the original entry unchanged, and contented himself with simply recording the date of Gorgonius of Nicomedia. Had he known the latter's proper day, 8 March, he would probably have transferred the whole entry as he did, as we shall see, in the case of St. Basilla.

8. *XVIII Kal. Oct.* Here is the worst of all Valentinus' changes. In Carthage this day was kept as that of St. Cyprian. But in his book, a Roman book, it was entered as that of Cornelius. He has apparently expunged Cornelius and written in *Cypriani*, at the same time convicting himself by leaving *in Callisti*. A yet later hand has endeavoured to explain the confusion by adding *Romae celebratur* which cannot possibly have been true as early as 354, though it may have been at a later date.

9. *X Kal. Oct.* Basilla of Rome, a very well-known Saint, after whom a whole cemetery was called, has her feast on 20 May. Valentinus has moved her down bodily, grave and all, to the day, apparently, of Basilla of Sirmium. He has added a date, 304, the persecution of Diocletian, which may very probably be right for Basilla of Sirmium, about whom little is known, but is certainly wrong for Basilla of Rome, who

[1] The Bollandists and most modern hagiographers accept the story of the 'translation' of Gorgonius of Nicomedia. To me, following in this Tillemont and Baillet, it seems much more likely that it is only another instance of confusion of names.

perished in the persecution of Valerian fifty years earlier. Basilla of Sirmium, by the way, is entered wrongly in the Roman Martyrology, 29 August, as being of Smyrna. As the change to *X Kal. Oct.* was probably made at Sirmium, the scene of the martyrdom, this date may have more authority than the one given in the Roman Martyrology.

10. *V Idus Nov.* Another Sirmium confusion. Valentinus found, no doubt, under this date the entry of *Quatuor Coronatorum*, the four nameless soldier martyrs of Rome who were buried *in comitatu*, that is to say, in the cemetery on the Via Labicana, *ad duas lauros*, which was called by that name because it was close to the imperial villa known as Villa Comitatus. In their place he has written the names of four of the five sculptor martyrs of Sirmium. Perhaps these, too, were known locally as *Coronati*. Otherwise it is hard to see how the mistake could have arisen. But the blunder of Valentinus, thanks to the respect accorded later to the book in which he wrote, has been fertile here, too, in confusing the lists of Roman martyrs. The first name, Clemens, should be Claudius. Probably this confusion is not due to Valentinus but to one or other of the later copyists. The name of Clemens should be on the following day, and belongs, not to the Bishop as Duchesne suggests, for his body was at the Chersonese at this date and not at Rome, but either to Flavius Clemens the Consul, the cousin of Domitian, martyred by him in 96, or possibly to another Roman martyr, Clement, otherwise unknown, who was buried *in comitatu*, and *graffiti* imploring his prayers may still be read there.[1] If

[1] See De Rossi in *Bull. di arch. crist.* 1879, and Marucchi in *Nuovo Bull.*, 1915, p. 7.

it is Flavius Clemens the Consul who is buried there the fact would be of special interest, as one of the rare instances in which we know the name and burial place of a Roman martyr of the first century, and it would supply an answer to Père Delehaye's contention that the cult of the martyrs and the practice of venerating their tombs did not begin in Rome before the year 200. But one would have expected that Flavius Clemens would have been buried not *in comitatu* but in Domitilla.

11. Finally we have, on the nones of September, the names of three martyr saints of Capua. Did Valentinus, perhaps, end up either as Governor or in retirement at Capua? Anyhow, here are the names, and on their proper day, while the fact that no place is named suggests that he was living there himself.

There will be, one would suppose, but little doubt in the mind of any reader when once he has gone through this list of needless confusions, that it is Valentinus himself who is responsible for most of them, and that in no case can they be regarded as official entries in a Roman calendar. They have no greater authority for us to-day than that of ill-informed entries made by a private gentleman in one of his own books.

We are now in a position, by eliminating these alterations, to make a restoration of the original *Depositio Martyrum* of 312 which will have, at least, considerable probability. It ran, we conjecture, as follows:

DEPOSITIO MARTYRUM

ANNO CCCXII

Mense Ianuario:

XIII Kal. Feb.	Fabiani in Callisti et Sebastiani in Catacumbas.
XII Kal. Feb.	Agnetis in Nomentana.
VIII Kal. Feb.	Pauli Ostiense.

Mense Februario:

VIII Kal. Mart. Petri in Cornelia.

Mense Maio:

XIIII Kal. Iun. Partheni et Caloceri in Callisti.

XII Kal. Iun. Basillae, Salaria Vetere.

Mense Junio:

III Kal. Iul. Petri in Catacumbas
et Pauli in Catacumbas.

Mense Julio:

VI Idus Iul. Felicis et Filippi in Priscillae
et in Iordanorum Martialis
Vitalis Alexandri
et in Maximi Silani
et in Praetextatae Ianuarii.

III Kal. Aug. Abdon et Sennes in Porniani.

Mense Augusto:

VIII Idus Aug. Xysti in Callisti
et in Praetextati Agapiti et Felicissimi.

VI Idus Aug. Secundi Carpofori Victorini
et Severiani Albano
et Ostiense VII ballisteria
Cyriaci Largi Crescentiani
Memniae Julianetis et lxmaraedi.

IV Idus Aug. Laurenti in Tiburtina

Idus Aug. Ypoliti in Tiburtina
et Pontiani in Callisti.

XII Kal. Sept. Timotei Ostiense.

V Kal. Sept. Hermetis in Basillae, Salaria Vetere.

Mense Septembre:

Non. Sept. Aconti in Porto.

V Idus Sept. Gorgoni in Lavicana.

III Idus Sept. Proti et Iacinthi in Basillae.

XVIII Kal. Oct. Cornelii in Callisti.

Mense Octobre:

Pri. Idus Oct. Callisti in Via Aurelia M.iii.

Mense Novembre:

V Idus Nov. Quatuor Coronatorum in Comitatu.

IV Idus Nov. Clementis et Sempronii in Comitatu.

IX Kal. Dec. Felicitatis in Maximi.

III Kal. Dec. Saturnini in Trasonis.

Mense Decembre:

Idus Dec. Ariston in Porto.

This gives us a quite consistent list; exclusively of Roman martyrs whose tombs were in Rome and could be visited by Romans; including all the most notable Roman martyrs prior to the last great persecution of Diocletian; all drawn up and described according to a single uniform pattern. We may assume, perhaps, that we have succeeded in reproducing the original list of 312 with a fairly close approximation to accuracy. The next table, which brings this list back into conformity with the one already printed by adding the later changes made by Valentinus, will enable us at a glance to distinguish these changes and to get an idea of the appearance of the original volume, at that particular opening, after the changes had been made.

For all these changes we have succeeded in suggesting a more or less plausible reason. Others perhaps may be able to make suggestions that are even more satisfying. For one of the three consular dates that have been inserted an explanation has been forthcoming. The date of 304 (Diocletian IX and Maximinian VIII) is that of Basilla of Sirmium and it has been given to Basilla of Rome. But for the same date given to SS. Parthenius and Calocerus, and for the date 258 (Tuscus and Bassus), which is attached to St. Peter and St. Paul on 29 June, no explanation has been given. The first is certainly wrong, and the second, if the possibility of a 'translation' of the bodies is ruled out, seems entirely meaningless. Is any explanation possible?

A very simple explanation was suggested about two years ago by Dom Henri Quentin O.S.B., but he did not follow up his own suggestion, and it seems to have been forgotten. I will state it again, carrying the

argument a little further than he did, and showing that two dates and not one only are involved.

In the original volume given to Valentinus the *Depositio Martyrum* was written on the two pages of a single opening, or in two columns on a single page if the book was large enough. Valentinus made his notes by writing them on the blank space between the two columns. After all, that was the natural thing for him to do, at any rate where there was no available room in the columns themselves. In the case of three non-Roman martyrs he was enough interested to enter the dates of their martyrdom. These were St. Cyprian of Carthage whose date was 258 (Tuscus and Bassus), St. Gorgonius of Nicomedia whose date was 304 (Diocletian IX and Maximinian VIII), and St. Basilla of Sirmium whose date was the same, 304. He entered these, or at any rate the first two, *in the centre space* opposite the names of these saints in the second column.

When the book came to be copied the copyist copied these additions and alterations faithfully. But, whereas in the original the list had occupied the two pages of a single opening, in the copy, for some reason, it occupied *recto* and *verso* of a single leaf; in other words, one page further on. So the copyist had to make up his mind to which column these dates referred. Unfortunately he guessed wrong and attached them to the names of the first column, instead of to those in the second. So the date of 304, really that of Gorgonius of Nicomedia, became attached to Parthenius and Calocerus, and in like manner the date of 258, Tuscus and Bassus, became attached to SS. Peter and Paul on 29 June, and of course has no meaning in that position.

If the experiment be tried and the Calendar

divided into two columns about the end of July it will at once be evident how easily the double mistake could have been made.

The explanation is complete, and could not be more simple. But, if it is accepted, it leaves the theory of a translation of the bodies of the Apostles in 258 without any kind of a basis to rest upon.

At a later date the copy of Valentinus' book passed into the hands of the compilers of the so-called Hieronymian Martyrology. They treated it with very great respect, perhaps because they thought it had a close connexion with St. Damasus and St. Jerome. The entry for 29 June was, no doubt, just as we have it now. *Petri in Catacumbas. Pauli Ostiense. Tusco et Basso Consulibus.* They had to make sense of this. So they altered it for their new compilation thus: *Petri in Vaticano. Pauli in Ostiense, utrumque in Catacumbis. Tusco et Basso Consulibus.* They did not know what the date referred to but left it in. A still later hand, realizing that this entry as it stood implied that the martyrdom took place in 258, added a further explanation, *Passi sub Nerone.* So the entry which has so puzzled our commentators was at last complete.

VII

LATER DEVELOPMENTS AT THE PLATONIA

I

It was a matter of keen disappointment and real distress to Mgr de Waal and his collaborators that their excavations at the Platonia had so entirely failed to give them what they sought. Their minds were still full of the third century, of the date 258, and the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus, and of the imaginary translation in that year of the bodies of the Apostles. They had found remains of the first century in the Platonia, and also a great deal of the fourth century, but nothing whatever which they could assign to the third. They had failed altogether to appreciate what they had found of the first century, and now thought that the Christian memories of the Platonia were exclusively connected with the fourth. They were still haunted by the one fixed idea. Somewhere, they felt, within the group of buildings which make up San Sebastiano, must have been the place where the Apostles were laid, and if it were not in the Platonia, they must look elsewhere.

With this object they went through again and again all the scanty documentary evidence they possessed. Then they realized that one at least of these documents could be taken in two ways. It was the record of the so-called Salzbourg pilgrim of the seventh century, written to guide fellow pilgrims who might follow in his steps. This is what he wrote:

'pervenies via Appia ad sanctum Sebastianum martyrem,

cujus corpus jacet in inferiore loco et ibi sunt sepulchra Apostolorum Petri et Pauli in quibus XL annorum requiescebant, et in occidentali parte ecclesiae per gradus descendis ubi S. Cyrinus papa et martyr pausat.'

It had always been translated, in complete accordance with tradition, to mean:

'You go along the Via Appia to St. Sebastian the martyr, whose body lies in the crypt. There, too, are the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, in which they lay for forty years, and (to reach them) you go down steps at the west end of the church to where St. Quirinus, pope and martyr, rests.'

But it was now seen that it could be taken otherwise, and mean that in the seventh century, it was not in the Platonia that the tombs of the Apostles were being shown, but in the church, and that the Platonia was regarded only as the tomb of St. Quirinus. This, then, was the new interpretation that was now offered:

'You go along the Via Appia to St. Sebastian the martyr, whose body lies in the crypt. There too are the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, where they lay for forty years. And you go down steps at the west end of the church to where St. Quirinus pope and martyr rests.'

The idea caught on and was strengthened by documents of quite late date which seemed to show a tradition that some memorial of the Apostles did lie under the church itself. So, still with the idea of recovering traces of the imaginary 'translation' of 258, fresh excavations were begun after the lapse of many years. The whole surface of the Basilica, from end to end, was taken up in 1922 and the following years, and an exhaustive search was instituted. The grounds for taking this action were in themselves quite insufficient to prove anything at all, but the resulting discoveries

were full of interest and importance. They found columbaria and tombs of the greatest beauty which belonged to the second century, and also uncovered further large portions of the villa of which we have already spoken. These finds, important as they are, have no immediate connexion with our subject, but there were other discoveries which concern us more closely, and to which alone we will address ourselves.

2

Of course the excavators did not find what they were hoping for, a hiding-place where the bodies of the Apostles had been laid. But they did make discoveries of very great importance, which were quite sufficient to make clear what was the nature of the sepulchral memory commemorated at this spot in the times of persecution. They found, in the very centre of the church, the remains of a *triclia* or drinking-place, prettily decorated, facing towards the Platonia, but which must have been separated from it, at that time, before the Basilica was built, by some sixty yards of rough ground. There was a bench there and a place for obtaining water. In its original state it must have been in character very like the seats for drinking to be seen outside many a country *osteria* near Rome, and was shaded probably, as they often are, by a trellis with vines and grapes overhead. The really important discovery was that the whole of the wall behind the bench was covered with *graffiti*, short messages roughly scratched, imploring the aid of St. Peter and St. Paul, or St. Paul and St. Peter, as each one's devotion ran, for pilgrims who had come there to honour them and

to ask their help. These rough scribblings, so unexpectedly preserved for us through the centuries, are perhaps the most convincing evidence of the reality of the presence of the Apostles in Rome that has come down to us. There are more than a hundred such inscriptions still legible, some complete, some partly perished. Here are a few examples:

PETRE ET PAVLE IN MENTE NOS HABEATIS.
PETRE ET PAVLE SVBVENITE PRIMO PECCATORI.
PAVLE ET PETRE IN MENTE HABETE SOZOMENVM ET TV QVI LEGIS.
PETRE ET PAVLE CONSERVATE VINCENTIVM.
PAVLE ET PETRE PETITE PRO NOBIS OMNIBVS.

These are simple requests for the prayers of the Saints, but there are others which speak of funeral banquets and libations in their honour!

PETRO ET PAVLO TOMIVS COELIVS REFRIGERIVM FECI.
AT PAVLVM ET PETRVM REFRIGERAVI.
XIIII KAL. APRILES REFRIGERAVI PARTHENIVS IN DEO ET NOS IN DEO OMNES.
DALMATIVS VOTVM IS PROMISIT REFRIGERIVM.

Sometimes the inscriptions are in Greek, and sometimes even Latin written in Greek characters, as, for instance, this:

παυλε ετ πετρε ιν μεντε νος αβετε.

The funerary character of these inscriptions is made clear by the frequent occurrence of the words *refrigerium* and *votum*, both of which at this period imply definite connexion with a rite offered especially at the actual tomb, an act of intercession on behalf of the offerer as well as of honour for the dead.[1] Besides

[1] The best account of this obscure rite will be found in two articles by Fr. Grossi Gondi S.J. in *Römische Quartalschrift* for 1915. Cf. also Lietzmann, *Petrus*

this *triclia* or drinking-place there was also discovered, leading down straight away from it from a concealed place at the back of a neighbouring tomb, a long straight staircase of no less than forty-two steps. This led to a passage which ran straight on for a short distance and then ended with a curious chalk arch, forming a kind of shrine. At a later date the passage had been continued and enlarged, no doubt to allow the freer circulation of pilgrims, but originally it had clearly ended with the chalk arch. This chalk arch again was covered with more *graffiti*, of precisely the same character as those of the *triclia*. The position of the arch was just outside the wall of the Platonia, but at a still lower level. To get under the Platonia was clearly the object aimed at.

It is not difficult for any one with knowledge of what is likely to happen in the times of persecution to reconstruct for himself the probable purpose of all this. One is irresistibly reminded of the story of the great and saintly Bishop Challoner in England in the early part of the eighteenth century, when the penal laws were still in force, preaching in the private room of a public-house in Holborn, to a congregation of men, each of whom had his pot of beer before him and was smoking a long clay pipe. If the police broke in—who could suggest an illegal religious service? So in like manner, in times when persecution was keen, when it was no longer possible to pray at the actual tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul and when even the Platonia was too dangerous to visit openly, Christian pilgrims had to

und Paulus in Rom, 2nd ed., p. 617. Fr. Grossi Gondi also wrote in *Atti della Pont. Acad.* II. xiv. 263: 'It does not signify a mere meal in common taken at the tomb, but rather a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which the martyrs already have and which the worshipper hopes some day to share.'

resort to a similar expedient. They made this quiet drinking-place, well back from the Appian Way, to which they could come, ostensibly only to refresh their bodies, but in reality to honour the saints by prayer and the '*refrigerium*'. They could not venture to go openly to the actual spot where the holy bodies had lain, but they would try to get underneath it and pray there in secrecy and in safety. Doubtless they thought, their measurement being in fact faulty, that the chalk arch marked the spot immediately under the marble tomb. So one by one they went down into the bowels of the earth and offered their prayers and libations there, in that most holy spot. These visits went on, we may imagine, all through the years of persecution, until in 312 peace came again and they could visit the actual tombs and the Platonia itself once more with safety. The inscriptions can scarcely be assigned to an earlier date than 312.[1] Before that time it would have been foolhardy to write invocations that were obviously Christian in a public drinking-place. But since they have not anywhere the Constantinian monogram, except in one or two places on the chalk arch below, we may conclude that they belong to the first glad years of peace, when Christianity was once more a *religio licita*, and Christian sentiments could be expressed openly and without danger, but before the *chi-ro* had come into general use.

3

There is a passage in the 'Acts' of St. Sebastian which has a certain bearing on the points we are

[1] The inscriptions are both Greek and Latin. By the fact that the Greek ones occur in groups it appears that these pilgrims came in bands. They could not have done this before 312.

discussing and ought now to be considered. After the saint had suffered his second martyrdom, being scourged to death by the order of Diocletian, his corpse was thrown into the *Cloaca Maxima*, so that the Christians might not be able to bury it or pay it honour. However, he appeared in a vision to the inevitable 'Lucina', told her exactly where his body was to be found, and bade her recover it, and then bury it '*ad catacumbas in initio cryptae juxta vestigia Apostolorum*'—'at the Catacombs, at the entrance to the crypt, close to the footprints of the Apostles'. This accordingly was actually done. The question then arises, what was meant by that strange word *vestigia*? To the people of the time, clearly, it presented no difficulty at all. St. Sebastian had designated the place in which he desired to be buried with great exactitude and his wishes were carried out without any doubt as to his meaning. What then did he mean? Those who have believed that the bodies of the Apostles had been translated to the Catacombs in 258, and that consequently they were there in 280, which is the date assigned to St. Sebastian's martyrdom, have translated *vestigia* as meaning 'relics'. But in the first place there seems to be no other instance of such a use of the word—either *corpora* or *ossa* would have been the obvious word to use—and in the second place, since the bodies were certainly not there and no one can have imagined that they were there, this interpretation becomes impossible. So too does the translation 'feet', 'bury me at the feet of the Apostles', for he was certainly not buried at any one's feet, that is clear from the position of the grave, and, again, the Apostles were not there.

Since, then, it seems impossible to give the word any

literal meaning, we must necessarily fall back on the metaphorical. What is a footprint? It is a trace left by a person in a place where he once was but is no longer. In that sense the use of the word is not uncommon. 'Following the Footprints of Christ in Galilee.' 'Footprints of St. Francis at Assisi.' 'Footprints of the Apostles in the City of Rome,' which last would have been quite a possible title for the present volume. In each case the word denotes a connexion of the person with the place during life—not after death. It cannot be used exclusively of a dead body. One cannot speak of the 'Footprints of Wellington at St. Paul's'. On the other hand, the fact that it is also the place of the tomb is no bar to the use of the word if there has been a connexion during life. One can quite well speak of the 'Footprints of Shakespeare at Stratford', or the 'Footprints of Napoleon at St. Helena', although one believes that Shakespeare still lies at Stratford, and that Napoleon was once buried at St. Helena before his remains were moved to Paris. Nor, again, we may be sure, would any one who wrote a book on the 'Footprints of Napoleon' fail to include in his subject the mention of that lonely grave beneath the overhanging willows with its all-sufficient epitaph of but two words: HIC JACET, 'Here he lies'.

To sum up this discussion. The choice of the word *vestigia*, 'footprints', seems to show that in 280 the tradition of Rome with regard to the place *ad Catacumbas* was that the Apostles had been connected with it during their lifetime and not only in death. The word cannot refer to the *triclia* so recently established, nor even, exclusively, to the marble tomb of the Platonia. Its use seems, therefore, to go towards

strengthening the many other considerations which have already been adduced to show that the memories of the Apostles at San Sebastiano must have included a residence in life as well as a temporary grave.

4

Three stones bearing inscriptions which were dug up in the middle of the eighteenth century a few yards to the south of San Sebastiano, may perhaps carry the story a little further. Two inscriptions are both to the same effect (*C.I.L.* vi. 205, 406), and recount that one L. Cornelius Scipio Orfitus,[1] who must have been, according to Lanciani, 'a descendant either direct or indirect of the Cornelius Pudens who was St. Peter's host', did in the year 295 erect on that spot a temple dedicated to Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods, and to Attis. Further, he had performed there the ceremony of sacrificing a bull and a ram (*taurobolium et criobolium*) and bathing in their blood. The bull was sacrificed to Cybele and the ram to Attis. A third stone found close by states that he also sacrificed there to Jupiter and to the Sun Serapis.

This discovery that land so close to the group of Christian buildings belonged two centuries later to a member of the family of Cornelius Pudens, suggests that it may all earlier have formed one property, and that the villa in which the Apostles took refuge may quite possibly have been a country house or farm of Pudens himself.[2] In that case it follows that Cornelius

[1] G. Marangoni, *Anfiteatro Flavio*, pp. 85–7, Rome, 1745; Cf. Lanciani in *Atti di Pont. Acad. di arch. cr.* II. xiv. 87 seq.

[2] On the other hand the discovery under the church of San Sebastiano of an inscription CALLISTVS IMPERATORIS CAESARIS VESPASIANI SERVVS may rather suggest that this property too belonged to the family of the Christian Flavians and that 'Lucina' was concerned here as well as on the Ostian Way.

Scipio Orfitus must, apparently, have been a renegade, who had left the Christian faith of his ancestors. He was a man of high position (*clarissimus*) and a member of the College of Augurs. The point that he built this shrine of Cybele so close to the Christian group of buildings, has its own importance. These eastern cults at the end of the third century were bitter rivals of Christianity, which in many respects they parodied. Wherever an important Christian centre existed, a shrine of Mithras or Cybele or Serapis seems to have been set up close by. The remains of such shrines have been found, one close to the tomb of St. Peter, another at San Clemente, another at Sta Maria in Domnica, and two more near the Capitol.

The fact, therefore, that it was worth while to build a shrine of Cybele in this distant spot, three miles away from the gates of Rome, is some evidence that the Christian sanctuary there situated was one of considerable importance and antiquity. A mere *triclia* such as was that of which we have been speaking would hardly have called for such opposition in 295.

A century later, when the *Basilica Apostolorum* was built, Mithraism and its kindred religions were already in their death struggles and Christianity triumphant. It was probably then or a little later that these shrines were destroyed, and no trace of them remains to-day except only these inscriptions.

5

THE BURYING OF ST. QUIRINUS

The years passed away after the death of Constantine, and in time St. Damasus, always eager to preserve the memories of the days of persecution, built, for it

seems to have been he who did it, the *Basilica Apostolorum*, the church we now know as San Sebastiano, on the site of these Apostolic memories. The Platonia itself at first he did not touch, but built his church over the old *triclia* and the site of the Roman villa whose outbuildings had once sheltered the Apostles. The Platonia, still open to the sky, and no doubt showing signs of age after 300 years of this exposure, adjoined the new church on the south-west, but had no connexion with it, remaining unchanged as a separate sanctuary with its own separate entrance and antechamber. The *Domus Petri* stood close by but entirely separate.

It was just at this juncture, about the year 380, that the remains of St. Quirinus, a very celebrated martyr of Pannonia, were brought to Rome by his disciples on account of an invasion by the barbarians. They were anxious to build a church in his honour, and St. Damasus would seem to have suggested to them as an alternative the 'restoration' of the Platonia, and the deposition of the martyr's relics in that holy spot. It is to this event that we must assign the very notable changes which were made there at this time, and which left the Platonia more or less in the condition in which we have it to-day. These changes can be traced pretty accurately.

It seems to have been determined to raise the level of the floor by no less than 10 feet, covering up the lower part of the twelve sepulchral niches, and the tombs they contained, and giving these niches the appearance of altar tombs; an appearance which they retained until the destruction wrought by the archaeologists in 1892 and the following years.

Before the level was raised the body of St. Quirinus,

in the casket in which it had been brought, was laid, it seems most likely, on a marble slab which still exists, on the old level and in immediate contact with the marble double tomb in the centre. From thence it was moved away again after many years had passed.

The raising of the floor level would have involved the covering up of the marble tomb itself, but this, of course, had to be preserved. Rough walls were therefore built round it as the floor rose, so that at last the tomb lay at the bottom of a kind of well, 8 feet 6 inches square and more than 9 feet in depth.[1] Probably because the walls were weak and might have been forced in by the pressure of the earth, a barrel roof of cement was arranged at a height of 8 feet above the marble floor. Thus there was formed an underground sepulchral chamber, which exists to-day completely unchanged. It can only be approached through an aperture in the barrel roof, and indeed, when the mode of its construction is considered, it is clear that it can never have been entered in any other way. Although no eye was expected ever to see it, the inside of this chamber was plastered over and painted with frescoes. These remain still, though much perished. The lunette formed by the roof above the marble slabs has an important representation of the well-known subject of 'Christ giving the Law' to a young man, possibly St. Anacletus, as the Moses of the New Covenant.[2] St. Peter stands by on the left. Only St. Peter is bearded. On each side there is a row of six figures, the twelve

[1] It became clear when I was allowed to excavate in February 1930, that this was the way in which the present 'well' came into existence.

[2] If it be really St. Anacletus the picture would have a considerable apologetic value. No other example exists of the 'giving of the Law' to any of the successors of St. Peter.

Apostles round their chiefs. The picture on the other side, if there ever was one, has completely vanished.

The aperture in the roof allowed the sepulchral chamber and the tomb it protected to be in communication, so to speak, with the upper floor. Above was erected an altar, following the orientation of the tomb beneath, which is apparently that of Jerusalem. It has two *fenestrellae* or small windows to allow the insertion of the head of a worshipper who wished to look down towards the chamber below.

By these new arrangements the height of the Platonia must have been reduced to a very great extent. The plans of Damasus therefore involved raising the walls for some feet above the ground level and supplying a roof. Up to this time no part of the structure would seem to have been above the general level of the ground on which the Basilica had been built. The lower portions of the Platonia, which is itself a volcanic depression, are long anterior to the building of the Basilica, but the upper portions are equally indubitably of a later date. Round the circular wall which now rose above the arches and supported the new roof, an inscription of great importance was placed, and this was discovered in the excavations of 1893, having previously been hidden by rows of stone coffins. It is painted only, and in great part has perished. This makes it difficult to say with absolute certainty what was its purport, for obviously the blanks can be filled in in various ways to suit the particular views of any who may be discussing its meaning. But it has all the characteristics of the work of St. Damasus, although it is not engraved on marble as was his usual practice but was painted round the wall. It certainly has reference to the translation

of St. Quirinus; claims the whole credit of the work then accomplished for a single individual; states that the spot selected was one worthy for a martyr's resting-place; and lastly asserts that what had been done was a glorious action and would redound to the honour of the martyr. The arrangement suggested by Professor Marucchi seems to meet the available data as well as any can do.

[*Obsequium praestans Damasus*[1] *mentemque*] devotam
Haec tibi martyr ego rependo munera laudis.
Hoc opus est nostrum, haec omnis cura laboris
Ut dignam meritis [*dent sancta haec limina sedem*]
Haec populis c[*unctis splendet quae*] gloria facti
Haec Quirine tuas [*laudes meritumque*] probabi[*t*]

This may be translated as follows:

'I, Damasus, offering the devotion of my mind, pay to thee, O martyr, these gifts of praise. Mine is the whole work, mine too the care and the labour, so that this holy spot might provide a worthy resting place for thy merits. This glorious action shines out before all the world and will show forth to all, Quirinus, thy praise and thy merits.'

The glory of the action (*gloria facti*), as Professor Marucchi has observed, can only lie in the fact that a spot already most holy had been selected for the burial of the martyr, to whom the highest honour possible had been paid by thus admitting him to the place already sanctified by the former presence of the Apostles.

If we allow, as I think we must, that these verses do belong to St. Damasus, and are the ones alluded to in the *Liber Pontificalis*, then it follows that already at that early date the term Platoma or Platonia had passed from the marble slabs of the actual monument to denote the whole structure of which it was the centre.

[1] Those who deny that the verses are Damasine easily amend this version by putting 'famulus' in place of 'Damasus'.

Most obviously no verses were ever placed on the monument itself. That became quite clear in the excavation I was allowed to make in March 1930, in order to examine the outside of the walls enclosing the sepulchral chamber under the altar. I had argued that this chamber had relation to the original lower level and not to the present level. I had pictured it as a kind of tower standing up originally in the centre of the Platonia, just as the Holy Sepulchre stands up in the centre of its church at Jerusalem. And I had fancied that we might possibly find some trace of the famous inscription on the outside of this monument. But I found that the monument had never existed at all as a visible structure except in my own fancy. The surrounding walls were rough walls built solely to keep back the earth from falling into the marble *bisomo*. We could date those walls by the frescoes on the inner side, which are generally accounted to be of the fourth century. It followed that the construction of the chamber over the *bisomo* and the raising of the level of the whole floor were contemporaneous, part of the same great change effected apparently by St. Damasus when the relics of St. Quirinus arrived. There can never have been any place inside the Platonia to which a marble set of verses can have been affixed. We must look elsewhere to find their original home, and the *Domus Petri* is the probable place, since it was there that the surviving fragments were discovered. But, even if we grant that the *Domus Petri* is the place where the Apostles hid from persecution, the Platonia still retains all its traditional sanctity as the place to which the holy bodies were first brought for temporary burial immediately after their glorious martyrdom.

VIII

THE TOMB OF ST. PAUL

In the midst of the confusion of 'the year of the four Emperors' there can have been little difficulty in carrying through the translation of the bodies of the two Apostles to their permanent tombs. Rome had other things to think of than the doings of the members of a crushed and broken sect who were never likely to give any further trouble.

All the world knows the localities to which the holy bodies were now brought. They know when they visit the splendid church which has once more risen from its ashes after the disastrous fire of a century ago, that the body of St. Paul lies somewhere within its walls. To explain more clearly the relation of the church to the original tomb is the task to which we must now betake ourselves. Very little has been written as yet on the subject, and the ordinary pilgrim finds it hard to come by the information which he requires if he is to understand what he sees.

The tombs of Christian martyrs from very early times until the twelfth century or later are almost invariably constructed upon a single plan. The altar is always exactly over the body; the coffin which contained it being hardly ever moved from its original place, but the church and altar being brought to it regardless of the expense or labour involved. A passage of communication is always placed between the inner part of the altar and the vault containing the coffin. There are many examples of this tradition still remaining in Rome, St. Peter's itself providing us with per-

haps the most notable example of all. But in no single case has the arrangement continued undisturbed. The passage of communication still exists in many instances, but in its present condition will invariably be found blocked.

Only in the provinces have examples survived intact, and the best of these is perhaps the Church of St. Nicholas at Bari, whither the relics of the Saint were brought in 1087. A window (*fenestrella*) is opened in the front of the altar; there is an open space revealed, into which one can insert the head and shoulders, and then, by means of a light lowered down a little well, the relics of the Saint, the actual bones, are visible at the bottom. In most cases it would not be the bones themselves, but the coffin containing them which would be seen. In the case of St. Nicholas the relics had already been removed from the coffin for the purpose of translation.

We know now something of what to expect in the case of St. Paul. There, too, is a window in the front of the High Altar. When one looks through one may see, some feet below, at the level of the earlier church, a pavement made up of several pieces of marble. On this pavement is engraved in large Roman capitals, that are upside-down in relation to the arrangement of to-day, the inscription, 'Paulo Apostolo Martyri'.[1] It is the original inscription marking the grave, and dates from the building of the original church in 338 or perhaps even a few years earlier. The lettering is characteristically of the date of Constantine, and the

[1] The inscription is not straight with the orientation of the church. Lanciani, *New Tales of Old Rome*, p. 166, ascribes this to carelessness. The real reason is made clear below.

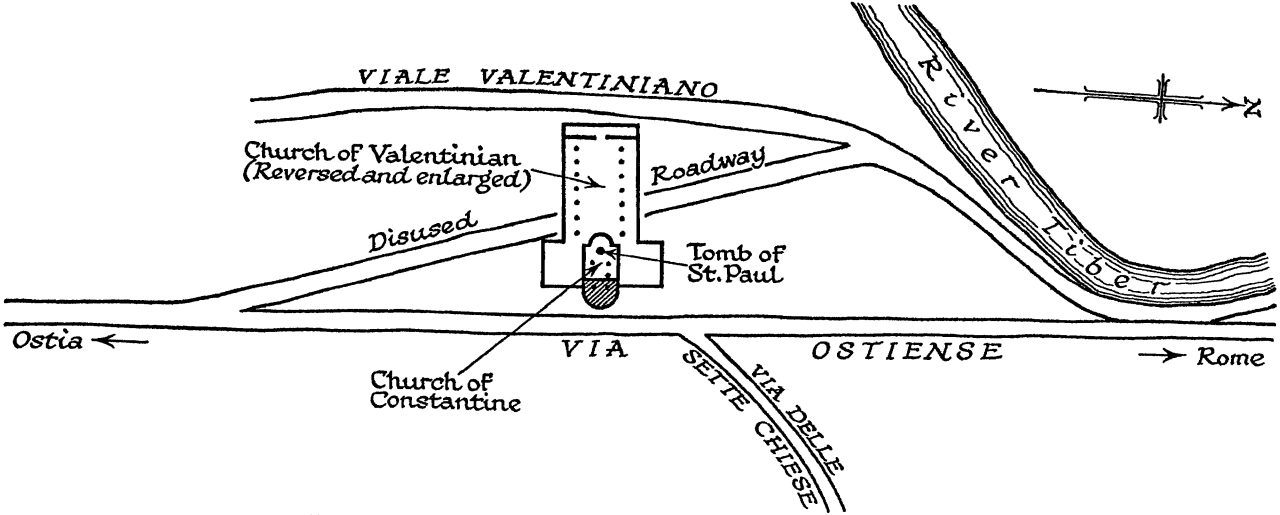
inscription has no doubt remained undisturbed throughout the centuries that have elapsed.

This pavement is pierced with three holes, two square and one round. The two square ones need not detain us, they are of later date and connected with an obscure medieval ceremonial. But the circular one in the centre is of primary importance. It is the *billicum*, as it was called, the opening of the little well leading to the tomb beneath, and is itself immediately over the sacred body. Thus, through this aperture, objects could be lowered and made to touch the coffin which contained it. Now, alas, it is blocked, and one can penetrate only to a depth of about 2 feet.

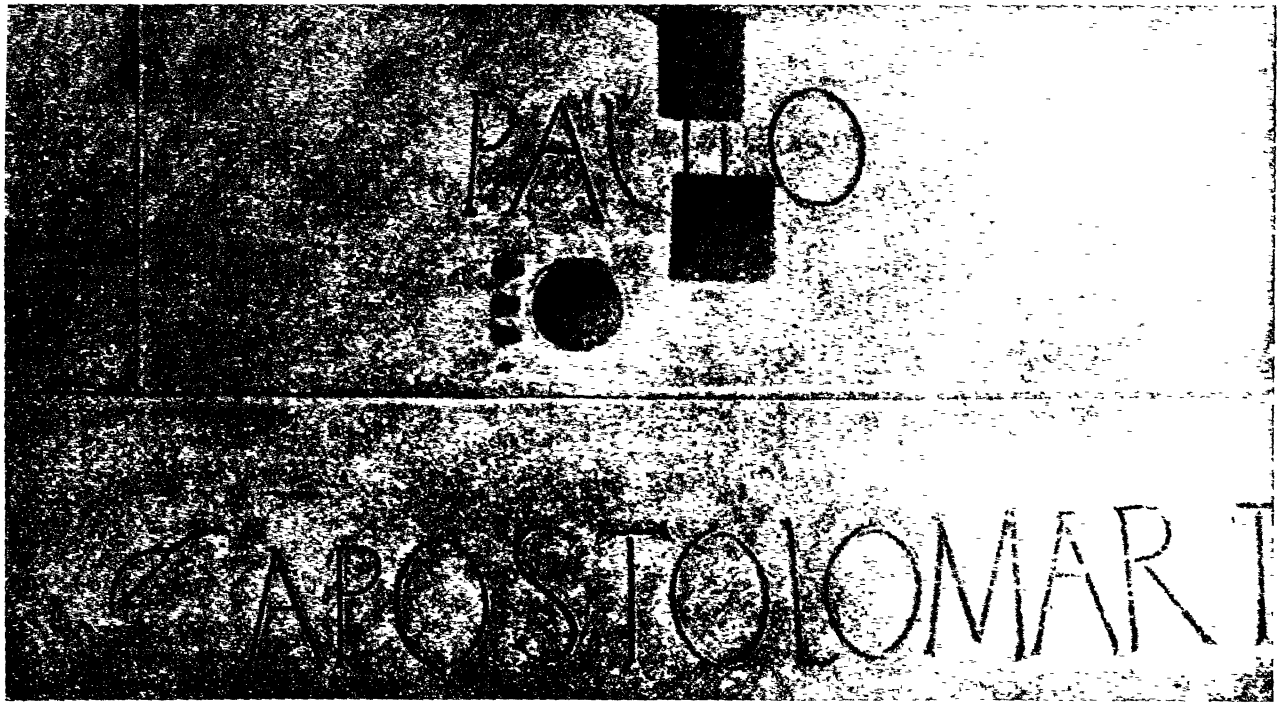
This is all that can be seen at present. We now go on to consider what can be gathered from such evidence as is available as to the nature and conditions of the vault beneath which the body of the Apostle actually lies.

In the year 1838, at the time of the excavation of the new 'confession' or sunken space in front of the High Altar, this vault seems to have been accidentally laid open, so that at least a momentary view was secured of the interior; but nothing more than the vaguest description of what was seen has been handed down to us. If we attempt under the circumstances to reconstruct the history of the tomb, it can only be in a somewhat tentative fashion, and with the expectation that further evidence, if it ever becomes available, may involve substantial changes in our conclusions.

St. Paul was buried, according to early tradition, by St. Lucina—doubtless a pseudonym taken for the purpose—in her own property on the Ostian Way. As a matter of fact it was not on the Ostian Way itself that



Plan showing the situation of the Tomb of St. Paul on the Ostian Way



MARBLE SLAB OF FOURTH CENTURY UNDER HIGH ALTAR OF ST. PAUL'S

the tomb was placed, but on a small paved lane, the Via Valentiniana, which ran from the main road, making with it rather a sharp angle. This joined up with the tow-path along the bank of the Tiber, which runs at this point at no great distance away. The pavement of this lane has been found repeatedly, both during the rebuilding of the Basilica and also quite lately when the main sewer from Rome to the sea was being dug. The vault would naturally be placed some 15 feet from the lane and parallel to it.

By a fortunate accident these natural conditions gave the best possible opportunity for so placing the body that it should face towards Jerusalem; a thing which at that date, A.D. 67 or 68, before the destruction of the city, would have been customary for all Jews, for Christians as well as others. The tomb seems to have been marked above ground by some kind of monument, the *tropaeum* alluded to by the priest Caius a century later, but there is no trace of an upper chamber above ground, such as there certainly was at St. Peter's.

When, about the year 338, after the peace of the Church, Constantine determined to honour St. Paul as he had honoured St. Peter, by building a church above the tomb, he found himself in a difficulty. A church at that period, if built on a free site, would only be built due east and west, so that the priest should face eastwards when celebrating, and the altar was always immediately over the body of the martyr. But the tomb in this case lay between these two roads, which ran close by it to the east and the west respectively. The rights concerning public highways rested with the Senate, not with the Emperor, and the Senate in 338 was still the stronghold of Paganism. In consequence,

though he utilized every inch of space he could without deflecting either road, Constantine could only build quite a small church. Fifty years later the Emperor Valentinian obtained leave from the Senate to close or deflect the lane, pulled down the church of Constantine and rebuilt it on a much larger scale, facing in the other direction. The whole of the older church was included by means of the present transverse nave. The altar remained unchanged and the priest still faced eastwards, though now, in this one basilica and here only, he faced towards the apse and not down the nave. When the church was again rebuilt after the great fire of 1825, the orientation of the altar was reversed, so that the priest now faces westwards and not eastwards. The general plan is thus brought into apparent but not real conformity with the other basilicas.

Now we come to the difficult question. What precisely did Constantine do to the tomb? Here we have the evidence of two comparatively recent eye-witnesses, and very scanty though it be, it will be best first to consider it, and then to consider how what was then seen can be reconciled with the accounts of what Constantine did long before. In 1838 history was being destroyed and liturgical propriety outraged by the decision to fill up the old 'Confession' which, in spite of the earlier rebuildings of the church, had remained unchanged ever since the day of Constantine, and to dig out a new one on the other side of the altar. This was done because, as the orientation of the church had been reversed, St. Paul's now seemed out of harmony with the other basilicas. It was brought into an unreal conformity by arranging that the priest, in that church alone, should face to the west when celebrating Mass.

Strict orders had been given that if the exterior of the vault should chance to be uncovered it should in no way be interfered with. But, by some accident apparently, an aperture seems to have been made, and it became possible to peer into the vault itself. If the orientation of the vault were, as I have suggested, towards Jerusalem, while the orientation of the altar was due east, it might easily have resulted in an unexpected corner of the vault projecting beyond the rest; and this may have caused the accident. We know nothing. The occurrence seems to have been kept very secret. Perhaps the anger of the Pope was feared. Anyhow there is no contemporary record of it in the *Diario Romano* or elsewhere. But long years afterwards, Vespignani, who was the architect in charge of the work, used to claim that he had seen the coffin of St. Paul, and that it was enclosed 'in a cage of iron bars'.

Explanation of this testimony is still available in the shape of some very rough sketches made by him in a notebook which was in the possession of Professor Lanciani up to the time of his death two years ago. There are also some very scanty recollections told to Fr. Grisar about forty years ago by the aged Abbot Zelli of the Abbey of St. Paul's. The abbot had been a monk at the abbey in 1838, and he also seems to have seized the opportunity of peeping into the vault. He remembered having seen the paving-stones of the lane, and the remains of Constantine's apse. These, however, were seen by everybody, and are unimportant. But he also remembered, so he said, that he had seen the *edificio* of the tomb itself, surrounded by bars (*spranghe*) of iron, very ancient, 'especially at the corners'.[1]

[1] Grisar in *Studi e diritti*, xiii. 356, note.

It is a great pity that Fr. Grisar, having come across this important piece of evidence, did not induce the abbot to be more explicit in his recollections. This, however, is all that he obtained, and now, since both are dead, there is no hope of further details from this source. The sketch of the *spranghe* which Vespignani has left to us, unfortunately without any kind of explanatory description, seems to show a strong lattice of metal bars, crossing each other so as to give squares of 4 or 5 inches opening, with some ornamental detail as they cross. It is built into a framework of stone, so as to make panels or windows in the structure. The 'cage', in fact, would seem to have been of stone, with large apertures closed by metal lattices.

If we put the evidence of the architect and that of the abbot together, we get the idea, so at least it seems to me, of a shrine enclosing the coffin and protecting it, so that it could be seen, and perhaps even touched by putting the hand through the lattice, but could not be actually approached. It is an arrangement in itself not improbable, and one which it would not be difficult to illustrate by a number of similar instances showing features more or less parallel.

We turn next to the account given in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the work done by Constantine when he was erecting the Basilica, to see whether the tentative conception at which we have arrived can be reconciled with the account of what was actually done. There is no detailed account of what was done to the tomb of St. Paul, except that it was treated in exactly the same way in which that of St. Peter had been a few years before. Turning to the account of St. Peter's we learn that Constantine enclosed the *loculus* or coffin of the

Apostle on all sides with bronze. Few passages are more obscure or have given rise to more interpretations, each more unacceptable than the last; and no one has hitherto succeeded in finding any really satisfactory interpretation.

There is a cryptic passage which follows, and has been responsible for most of the confusion. It runs, 'five feet at the head and five feet at the feet, five feet on the right hand and five feet on the left, five feet above and five feet below, thus did Constantine shut him in and hide him away'. But it seems to admit a quite new but also quite possible interpretation more or less in accordance with the evidence of Vespignani and the abbot. It is true that they thought, naturally enough, that the metal work which they saw was of iron; but, apparently, they could not examine it closely, and saw it only by very inadequate light and at some little distance. After 1,500 years, with inevitable accumulations of dust, they might well be mistaken on such a point as that.

This interpretation explains, too, the phrase 'which is not movable' in the *Liber Pontificalis*; this grammatically refers to the bronze. The bronze lattice of bars was not movable; there was no door that could be opened, but the bars were clamped into the stone, allowing possibly the passage of the hand to touch the coffin, or to put small objects in contact with the coffin, but nothing more. The explanation of the difficult and mysterious passage about the 5 feet in every direction, would remain, as it seems to me, capable of only one explanation. There was a passage about 5 feet wide all round the *edificio*, and the grating or cage was on the level of the coffin, 5 feet above the floor and 5 feet

below the roof. That, I suggest, is the only plausible interpretation.

At the same time, while partly satisfied with this explanation, I must admit at once that the matter is by no means fully cleared up. I can make but little, for instance, of Vespignani's drawings as published by Lanciani in *Wanderings through Ancient Roman Churches* only a short time before his lamented death; Lanciani's comments, too, are far from clear, and indeed absolutely misleading. I can make nothing either of Abbot Zelli's statement, as reported by Fr. Grisar, that the bars were visible 'especially at the corners'. Is it possible that Grisar mistook the abbot's meaning? The sketch-book of Vespignani was not then known, and Grisar can have had but the vaguest idea as to the nature of the structure that the aged abbot was describing from his recollection of a momentary glimpse through semi-darkness fifty years before. It would fit in much better with the rest of the evidence if we could think that what the abbot really meant, and perhaps said, was not 'especially at the corners', but rather 'except at the corners'.

It may perhaps be well for the sake of clearness if I sum up the conclusions to which all this evidence seems to lead. St. Paul lies in a stone coffin immediately under the High Altar. If the little round passage from the *billicum* under the present altar were reopened, we could once more lower objects into the vault, and perhaps, with modern appliances, obtain photographs of what is below. What we should expect to find is a vault about 20 feet by 17, with the coffin in the centre, probably raised above the ground. We should expect to find this coffin enclosed and hidden away in a

structure of stone, with large gratings of bronze. This structure would go right up to the roof of the vault, and would be designed to strengthen the roof so that it would be able to support the weight of the great stone altar above. Above the coffin there might or might not still be the great cross of gold, 150 pounds in weight, which Constantine is said to have placed there, and which would alone have justified the provision of the metal lattice and the stonework which protects it.

The vault must originally have had some means by which it could be entered. The steps down to it would probably have been on the side facing the lane. But all trace of them has disappeared, nor does any tradition remain as to their situation. Indeed, there is no certainty that access has ever been possible since the time of Constantine and the original building of the church in 338.

IX

THE TOMB OF ST. PETER

ALMOST every one who is visiting Rome for the first time, and for the first time finds himself facing the overwhelming grandeur of the interior of St. Peter's, goes on to ask, as soon as he has recovered from the wonder of that first impression, where it is that the Apostle actually lies, and what is the exact relation between his tomb and the great church which has been built around it.

It is fortunately a question which it is not difficult to answer. So great has been the reverence for the actual tomb and for its immediate surroundings that its history is still clear and its locality still traceable, although wellnigh two thousand years have passed away since the Apostle was laid to rest, and although it is more than a thousand since any eye has rested upon the actual sarcophagus in which his body lies.

I

We pass up the centre of the church, straight to the High Altar, and to the many twinkling lights that surround the sunk place in front of it, which we now know as the 'Confession' of St. Peter. Facing us as we lean over the parapet, on the lower level immediately under the High Altar, and immediately in front of the kneeling figure of Pope Pius VI, we shall see two gates of gilded bronze enclosing apparently something of great importance behind. These gates are now almost always closed, although not many years ago they always stood open on the greater feasts such as Easter

Sunday or the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. It is still possible to get them opened, although application will have to be made to one of the higher officials of the Basilica. We will suppose that this has been done, that the gates are open and that we are at liberty to examine the spot; one of the holiest and most interesting that even Rome contains. We shall see a long narrow recess about 6 or 7 feet in depth and about 3 in width which runs back under the High Altar, not quite under the centre, but perhaps a foot or a little more to the left. Our view into this deep recess is rather blocked by a large golden casket, the work of Benvenuto Cellini, in which are contained the *Pallia*, the vestments which are the special tokens of a delegated share in the hierarchical jurisdiction of the successor of St. Peter, and are sent 'from the body of St. Peter' to every Archbishop in the Catholic Church. We will suppose this casket removed, so that the view into the recess is unimpeded.

The walls and end of the recess are covered with mosaics. Those of the side are comparatively recent, placed there by Urban VIII about the year 1630, to replace others which had perished through age. At the back the mosaic is curved—not with a single semicircular curve, but rather with a combination of two curves, both apparently more or less segments of circles, but the part to the left drawn with a longer radius than the part to our right. It is evident that the recess was once wider, that the curve on the left once was continued over the whole, and that the whole recess has been narrowed by being built up on the right side. This is the reason why it now appears not to be under the centre of the Altar. Its axis was immedi-

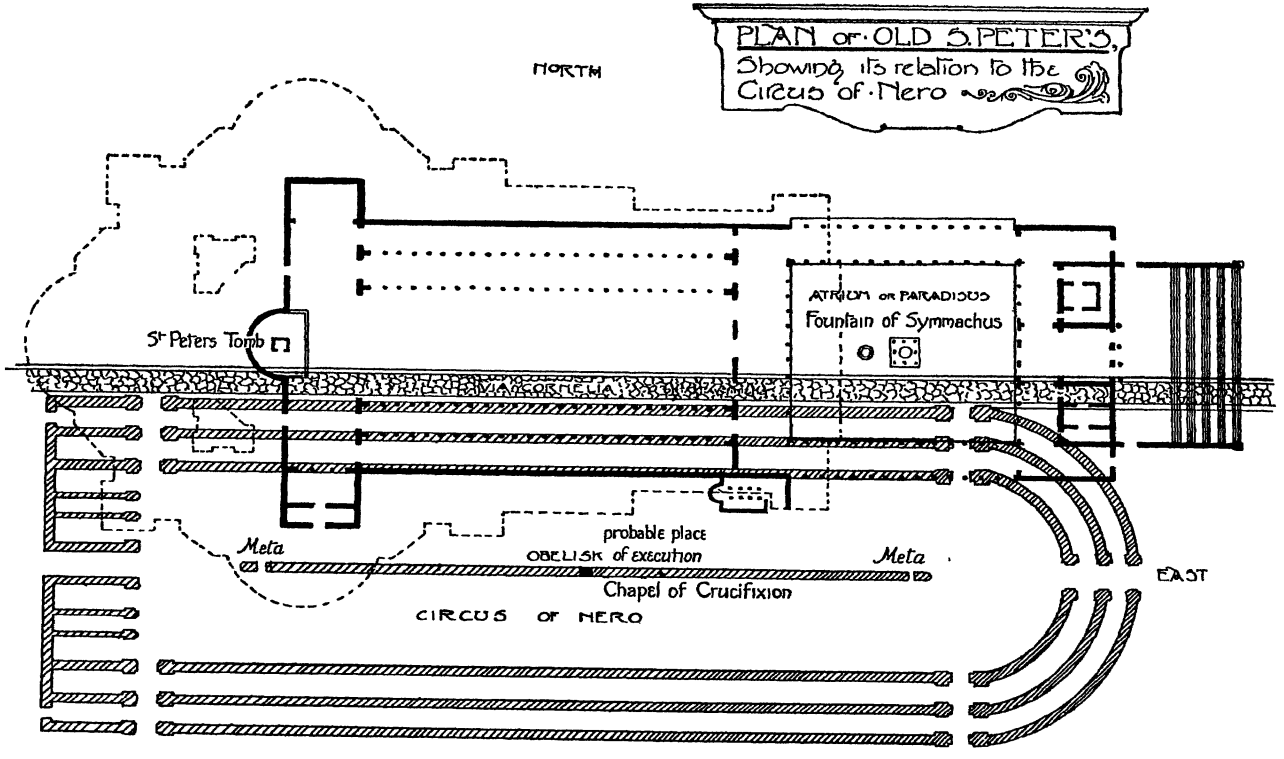
ately under the centre in the original arrangement and before the building up of the right side was carried out. The mosaic at the back is of the ninth century, and since it is fitted to the present double curve, it follows that the building up was of that date or earlier. As a matter of fact it was done in the ninth century by Leo IV. We are looking at the actual repairs carried out by that Pontiff after the disastrous occupation of St. Peter's by the Saracens in 846. The recess itself is much older than that and not only goes back to the Basilica of Constantine, but in a way preserves the arrangement and occupies the space of a portion of the original tomb built to receive the body of St. Peter immediately after his martyrdom. It is a space left free from the substructures which hold up the High Altar, because it is immediately over the sarcophagus in which St. Peter lies. From the centre of it, although now blocked with rubbish, there still goes down a little square shaft, by means of which in former days objects of devotion were lowered to rest on the actual sarcophagus itself some 15 or 20 feet below.

So the question where St. Peter lies is answered. He lies immediately under the centre of the High Altar, looking eastward, his head towards the apse and his feet towards the great entrance doors. When the Pope says Mass at the High Altar the chalice is as nearly as may be over the Apostle's head. As the whole body lies under the Altar, there is no chamber for relics in the usual place in the Altar itself.

2

In order to make intelligible the story of the tomb and its relation to the great church above, it will be

best to begin by surveying the locality as it was in the Apostle's time. It was not then included in the city. The Rome of those days for the most part lay to the south, round the Forum and on the higher ground of the seven hills. The now crowded district between the Corso and the Tiber was then free of buildings, and was used as the Campus Martius or exercise ground for military operations. Out towards the Vatican there ran a road, the Via Cornelia, beginning at a bridge that crossed the Tiber more or less where we now have the Ponte Sant' Angelo, a road still represented at its lower end by the Borgo Vecchio, the narrower and meaner of the two streets that go towards St. Peter's. It ran straight across the Piazza, passing to the left of the present position of the Obelisk, and thence right through the great church in a straight line from the doorway on the left—the opposite side to the Porta Santa—just to the left again of the great columns of the baldacchino, and so out through the apse to where the Church of Sta Marta now stands. Thence it ran on in a straight line into the country towards Civita Vecchia. It was not one of the great roads of Rome, but had a certain importance in its earlier portion because it led to the newly built Circus and gardens which had been originally erected by Caligula and then became the property of Nero, the reigning Emperor. To the left of this road we must imagine the great lofty stone wall of the Circus, only broken by the gates at each end which gave access to it from the road. The other side of the road was occupied by tombs, as was so often the case with the roads leading out of Rome. Very many of these tombs, mostly of Pagan origin, were uncovered in the course of the rebuilding of St. Peter's in the


PLAN of OLD S. PETER'S,
Showing its relation to the
Circus of Nero
NORTH
ATRIUM or PARADISUS
Fountain of Symmachus
St Peters Tomb
Meta
probable place
OBELISK of execution
Meta
Chapel of Crucifixion
CIRCUS OF NERO
EAST

sixteenth century. But among these tombs there was at the time one small plot of land which was in Christian hands. This plot had already been utilized for the victims of the persecution in the great massacre of 64. The burnt and mangled remains were found in a great marble chest in the course of digging the foundation for the south-east column of the baldacchino in 1626. Close to the spot where they had been buried the new tomb was built which was to receive the body of St. Peter, and to this tomb, as soon as it was ready and other circumstances permitted, the body was removed from its temporary resting-place on the Via Appia.[1] There would be no difficulty in this in Roman law. The date, if the traditional clues can be trusted, may possibly have been 22 February, A.D. 69.

We can form a tolerably clear idea of the appearance of this original tomb from the discovery of its outer wall in the course of the excavations of 1626 for the purpose of erecting the great baldacchino.[2] The wall was uncovered twice in the course of the excavations for each one of the two southern columns. We have the description of what was found, all too slight, from an eyewitness, a canon of St. Peter's, Ubaldi by name. He tells how, in the part nearer to the Altar, coffins of marble without any inscription were uncovered lying laterally along a very ancient wall, which wall they thought turned towards the Altar and therefore must enclose the actual sarcophagus of St. Peter. This wall was presumably the outer wall of the vault in which he lies. That he does lie in a vault and not in an ordinary

[1] *Supra*, p. 99.

[2] For a detailed account of these excavations see A. S. Barnes, *St. Peter in Rome*, pp. 315 seq.

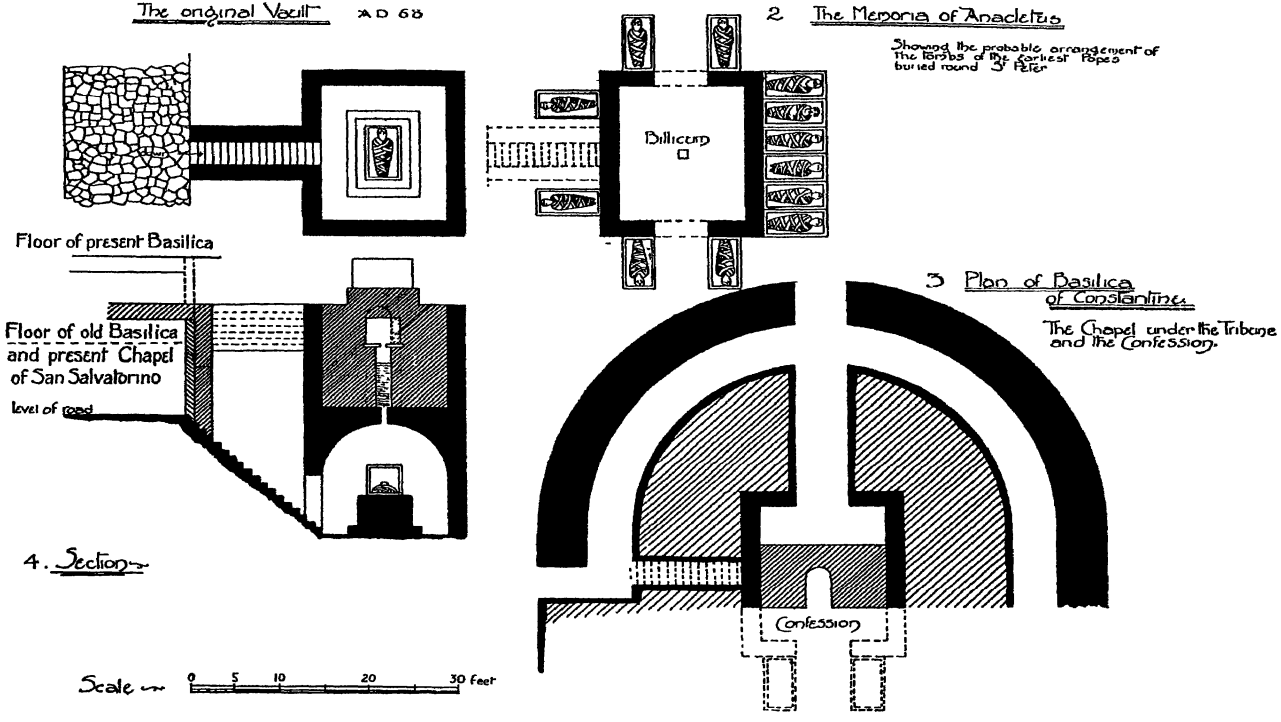
grave we know from the account in the *Liber Pontificalis* of the decoration of the vault by Constantine, an account which though not contemporary was made at a time when the vault was still accessible. Two of the coffins which lay close to this very ancient wall were opened, and each of them was seen to contain two bodies. 'They were clothed with long robes down to the heels, dark and almost black with age, and were swathed with bandages like infants; the bandages passing also over the head.' These bodies went at once to dust on being exposed to the air. They were thought perhaps to be the bodies of the earliest successors of St. Peter, of most of whom it is recorded that they were buried on the Vatican close to the body of St. Peter.

This first discovery of the wall was made in the course of the excavations for the south-east column, and the same wall was again found in excavating for the other column on the southern side. This time more of it was uncovered and it was now clear that though the larger portion had always been underground, the upper part had been above the surface and was decorated with stucco ornament still well preserved. They did not quite realize what they had found, and thought only that it was the remains of 'some little temple or theatre of heathen times'.

From these discoveries, which fit in altogether with tradition and with the later history of the tomb, we are justified in concluding that the original tomb in which St. Peter was laid was one of those two-storied tombs, examples of which are by no means uncommon, still standing along the various roads leading out of Rome and other ancient cities. There are some very good and well-preserved examples, dating from about the

same time, which may still be seen on the Via Latina, and although no stucco decoration has survived on the outside of any of these tombs, there are magnificently preserved examples of inside decoration in stucco of about the same date to be seen both on the Via Latina and also in two of the tombs newly discovered under the Church of San Sebastiano.

We have to picture to ourselves, therefore, an oblong building, measuring perhaps some 22 or 24 feet by 18, lying back a few feet from the road and with its longer side towards the road. It was a building apparently of some artistic importance, decorated with stucco work. There will have been a vault underneath in which the actual sarcophagus would be placed, and which would generally be kept closed, and a second chamber of corresponding size above. These upper chambers were constantly provided in the pagan tombs of the period. The purpose was to allow of family reunions, visits to the tomb, and celebrations of memorial sacrifices on the anniversary of the death and on other occasions. Owing to the great reverence of the Romans for any place of actual entombment, it was no doubt quite possible for the Christians to carry out such visits and reunions, and even to celebrate the Eucharist in this upper chamber. Certainly this could have been done during the first thirty years of peace, until persecution broke out again under Domitian. Even after that date, it would probably always have been possible except during certain periods from 258 onwards, when the persecutions under Valerian, Decius, and Diocletian were especially violent, and extended to depriving the Christians even of the rights of free access to their own cemeteries.


The original Vault AD 68
2 The Memoria of Anacletus
Showing the probable arrangement of the tombs of the earliest Popes buried round St Peter
Billicem
Floor of present Basilica
Floor of old Basilica and present Chapel of San Salvatorino
Level of road
3 Plan of Basilica of Constantine
The Chapel under the Tribune and the Confession.
4. Section
Confession
Scale 0 5 10 20 30 feet

Sketch showing probable development of the Tomb of St. Peter

It has always of late years been the received opinion that this upper chamber of St. Peter's tomb was an addition built as a '*memoria*'[1] by his successor Pope Anacletus. My own present view, as I have already said, is that the Platonia at San Sebastiano is more likely to be that work of Anacletus which is referred to in the *Liber Pontificalis*, and that the upper chamber at the tomb was part of the original construction and not a later addition. The description given of the existing remains by Ubaldi, 'a very ancient wall most of which had evidently always been underground, but the upper part of which had been ornamented with stucco', certainly suggests that it was all of one construction, and supports the idea that we must look elsewhere for the work of Anacletus.

We have records of the existence of the monument at several times during the ages of persecution. The earliest reference is that of Caius, a presbyter of Rome towards the end of the second century, who is quoted by Eusebius as saying 'I can show you the monuments (*tropaea*) of the Apostles, for whether you go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way you will meet with the monuments of those who founded the Church'.[2]

3

Here in the earliest ages came the earliest Popes, so Tertullian tells us, to offer the Holy Sacrifice over the Apostle's body. Here, too, throughout those ages came the faithful in pilgrimage from all parts of the world. Again and again in the histories of the martyrs

[1] According to Armellini, *Archeologia Cristiana*, p. 159, the term 'Memoria' always stood for a monument above ground. The term was used in Africa for a tomb, but in Rome denotes generally a cenotaph or other memorial building.

[2] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* ii. 25.

it is recorded that they had come from far-off countries to Rome that they might pray at the tombs of the Apostles. Thus St. Marcius came with his wife Martha and his two sons Abbacus and Audifacius for this purpose all the way from Persia in the year 269; St. Paternus from Alexandria in 253; St. Maurus from Africa in 284.[1] Again it is told of SS. Simplicius, Constantine, and Victorian that on their arrival at Rome they went immediately to the tomb of St. Peter, and being followed there by soldiers and captured while praying there, were immediately sentenced to death. Again we read of St. Zoe in the 'Acts' of St. Sebastian, that she was surprised while praying at the tomb of St. Peter and therefore martyred. These records, even if some be of doubtful authority, are enough to prove that the practice of making pilgrimages and visiting the tombs of the Apostles was widely spread in early times; for, if some pilgrims were not deterred from going to the shrine even by the fear of death, we can understand how many must have gone there in the interval when the persecution was raging less fiercely. Pilgrimage to the holy places of Jerusalem was in those ages almost impossible, since a heathen temple had been built on the site of the Holy Sepulchre; and it was therefore to Rome, and especially to the tomb of St. Peter, that the devotion of Christendom chiefly turned. The recent discoveries at San Sebastiano show us something of the expedients adopted to satisfy the craving of this devotion when persecution was most violent and access to the actual tombs was for the time impossible.

Round this monumental chapel of St. Peter, not

[1] *Mart. Rom.*, 19 Jan.; 21 Aug.; 22 Nov.; 26 Aug.

inside the vault but in ordinary graves round the wall, were buried most of St. Peter's immediate successors in the Papacy. Their bodies were found, as has already been said, in the course of the excavations in 1626, surrounding St. Peter, as those who were present have recorded, 'like bishops assisting at a synod or council'. Only in one instance was a name discoverable. On a marble slab which had been used to cover a sarcophagus there was still legible the name of LINUS. There is a certain want of exactness in the various accounts which have come down to us, and it is possible that the letters may have once formed part of a larger name such as (Marcel)linus or (Aqui)linus, but on the whole it seems probable that this was actually the body of the immediate successor of St. Peter. I have discussed the question at length elsewhere and it need not detain us now.[1]

We know nothing of the fate of the monument during the last persecution of Diocletian, by far the most violent of all. On the one hand we may feel sure that the actual tomb was left unviolated; the destruction or violation of tombs was always in Roman eyes the grossest sacrilege. On the other hand we know that all known Christian places of worship were destroyed and that access to the cemeteries was forbidden. If the upper chamber of the tomb had been, as is probable, in constant use for Christian worship under shelter of the Roman laws protecting tombs and funeral celebrations, it would seem possible that it may now have been unroofed and rendered useless for this purpose. We have no evidence at all to help us, but it is easier to understand the course taken by Constantine in building

[1] Cf. A. S. Barnes, *St. Peter in Rome*, pp. 310–12.

the Basilica if we think of the monument as being in this state, the actual vault untouched, but the upper chamber, though not destroyed, unroofed and dismantled. How best to repair the damage that had been done and to do most honour to the memory of the Apostle was the problem that faced Constantine and Sylvester and the architects they employed, when once the resolution of erecting the Basilica had been formed.

4

The Christian buildings erected under the auspices of Constantine follow two well-marked types. We can see an example of each, close to one another, in the two churches of St. Agnes and St. Costanza on the Via Nomentana. Where there was a central object to be preserved, or a tomb other than that of a martyr in the middle of a mausoleum, the building took a circular form. It was thus with the Holy Sepulchre, in spite of the great expense involved in cutting away the rock, and also with the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives. If, on the other hand, Constantine was dealing with the tomb of a martyr, or if the church had no special centre of devotion—as was the case, for instance, with his great church at Tyre—then the building took the form of a basilica, always provided with an apse, on the chord of which the principal altar was placed. In this case of St. Peter's tomb both conditions were present. On the one hand there was the actual monument, endeared to all by centuries of persecution, which could hardly be destroyed, and on the other hand it was the tomb of a martyr, and especially suited for the erection of a great basilica because

of the existing foundations of the Circus, much of which could again be utilized. If the monument had still been intact one is inclined to wonder whether the circular plan adopted at the Holy Sepulchre might not have been used here also, so that the tomb with its upper story would have had its place in the centre, with the altar inside, much as is the case with the Holy House at Loreto to-day. If, however, the upper part of the tomb had already been unroofed and dismantled in the time of persecution this argument for preserving it would be less strong. Constantine, too, was a frugal soul, and the opportunity of utilizing the foundations and so much of the material of the Circus, to say nothing of the poetic justice of turning the building in which so much Christian blood had been shed to the use of a great Christian church, perhaps decided the question in favour of the basilica form.

But it was still felt necessary, apparently, to preserve in some way the little upper building which had been for so long a centre of Christian devotion. Hence a design was finally resolved upon which should achieve this result while leaving the general form of the basilica unchanged. There was one special feature which marked off the design of the old Church of St. Peter from all others which had been erected up to that time, though the fact that this feature was constantly copied afterwards has obscured the unique character of the original plan. This feature was the raising of the floor of the whole of the apse, so that there was no 'confession' or excavation in front of the altar such as we find in almost every other case. A chapel was left under the floor of this apse, representing the western portion of the old upper chamber, and this was approached by

circular passages running close inside the outer wall of the apse. The High Altar was placed on the upper level immediately above the sarcophagus in the vault below, and the intervening space between the top of the vault and the altar was left vacant above the sarcophagus, forming the niche or recess of which we have already spoken, and which still remains unaltered except for the repairs made necessary by the Saracen inroad of 846. The front part of the old upper chamber, now no longer visible above the new level of the church, was marked out and preserved to memory by an enclosure of six columns of special beauty, brought from the east for this purpose. At a later date six more of the same pattern were added, so that there were twelve in all, and eleven of these are still in use in various parts of the present church. The legend that these were brought from the Temple at Jerusalem, and that Our Lord had Himself leant against one of them, seems not to have any solid foundation.

The dimensions of the great church were decided within very narrow limits by the conditions of the site. The width of the nave, since the tomb must be in the centre, was necessarily double the distance from the middle of the tomb to the outer wall of the Circus. The foundations of this outer wall now supported the inner line of columns, while the foundations of the wall supporting the upper seats were now utilized for the second row of columns. The foundations of the third wall, which had never had much strain upon them, were utilized for the outer wall of the church. It was the want of solidity in these last foundations, thus called upon to bear a weight for which they had not been designed, which eventually led to the instability of the

old St. Peter's and to its supersession by the present building in the sixteenth century.

The economy which thus began with the foundations was carried on in the rest of the building. The columns were brought from various older heathen buildings, so that scarcely any two were alike. Nevertheless the object aimed at was attained. The new church was on a scale of magnificence far beyond anything Christianity had hitherto possessed, and worthy to be compared with some at least of the heathen temples which still remained standing and in full use everywhere in Rome.

Although the memory of the old upper chamber was preserved by the chapel under the apse, we have no record of any decoration carried out at this time. St. Gregory the Great seems to have been the first to bring it into use and to have placed an altar there. But we have in the *Liber Pontificalis* a very full description of the adornment by Constantine of the actual vault in which St. Peter lay. The account is not contemporary with the execution of the work, but it was drawn up when the vault was still accessible and may therefore be trusted as probably accurate. Constantine, we are told, enclosed the *loculus* or stone coffin of St. Peter in copper bronze, very solidly (*quod est immobile*).[1] The record then goes on in a most enigmatic way: 'At the head five feet; at the feet, five feet; on the right hand, five feet; on the left hand, five feet; below, five feet, and above, five feet; thus did he enclose the body of blessed Peter and shut him away.' This strange statement has been interpreted in many ways. The

[1] *Lib. Pont.*, ed. Duchesne, p. 176: 'Ipsum loculum undique ex aere cypro conclusit, quod est immobile: ad caput, pedes V; ad pedes, pedes V; ad latus dextrum, pedes V; ad latus sinistrum, pedes V; subter, pedes V; supra, pedes V; sic inclusit corpus beati Petri apostoli et recondit.'

one generally accepted in former days was that the receptacle in which the body now lies is a perfect cube, measuring 5 feet in every direction. But obviously this will not do. It is the original *loculus* that is in question, not a new casket, and such a shape is out of the question. A second interpretation, of considerable antiquity since it occurs in some manuscripts both of the *Liber Pontificalis* and of the apocryphal 'Acts', is that the coffin was surrounded by a solid mass of bronze measuring 5 feet in thickness in every direction. This has lately been put forward again by Mgr Wilpert. But, again, it is not possible, both on account of the prodigious quantity of bronze to be thus unprofitably used, and because it would not be possible to get the bronze into the vault and round the coffin except in a liquid state.[1] A third interpretation was put forward by myself some thirty years ago, and still seems to me the most probable and indeed the only intelligible one. It is that the chronicler noticed the fact that the coffin, thus enclosed with bronze, stood immediately in the centre of the vault in which it lay, so that it was distant just about 5 feet in every direction from the walls. That would give a vault approximately 17 by 14 feet and a height of about 14 feet, which must be very nearly the actual size. We can check the measurements to some extent by the discovery of the outer wall of the vault in 1626, and by the map of the crypts made by Drei, the master-mason at that time. I was fortunate enough to discover some years ago in the British Museum a unique copy of this map, covered with manuscript notes in Drei's own handwriting.[2]

[1] Even this is suggested by a twelfth-century writer, Mallius.

[2] B.M. Maps 23810 (2).

I have already, in the last chapter, suggested a possible explanation of what is meant by the statement that Constantine 'enclosed the coffin in bronze'. As we know that he treated both tombs in exactly the same way, whatever evidence we possess for either applies equally to both. Here too, therefore, I would suggest that we must imagine a stone enclosing 'edifice' with lattice windows of bronze.

On the top of the bronze monument, we are further told in the *Liber Pontificalis*, Constantine placed a cross of the purest gold weighing no less than 150 pounds, and of the size needed to fit the place (*in mensura loci*).

5

This sepulchral chamber thus decorated remained accessible, it would appear, for the 500 years that immediately followed, but it was only opened on very rare occasions, and we cannot be sure that the chronicler in the *Liber Pontificalis* had actually seen it. St. Gregory of Tours, who has left us a vivid account of a pilgrimage to the shrine made by his deacon Agiulphus, tells us that the sepulchre itself was not available for ordinary pilgrims (*raro habetur*), but that the ordinary practice was for the gate to be opened in front of the recess already noted, which is under the altar and immediately above the sarcophagus, and for the pilgrim to enter and then make his prayer down the little passage leading to the tomb, the door being raised for the purpose. He was allowed, too, to lower handkerchiefs and other objects of devotion to touch the tomb, or to offer new keys to open the shrine and

then to carry away as a relic the ones that had been used before.[1]

The last person of whom we have a record that he was allowed to enter the actual sepulchral chamber itself seems to be Charlemagne when he went to Rome for Easter in the year 774. The magistrates and senators went out to meet him some thirty miles from the city, and as he approached nearer another procession was sent to receive him, bearing crosses and sacred banners. So soon as the Emperor saw the cross coming towards him he dismounted, as also did all his suite, and the rest of the journey to St. Peter's was accomplished on foot. At St. Peter's the Pope was waiting for him at the top of the great flight of steps which led to the courtyard before the church. Charlemagne ascended the steps on his knees, as was the custom of devout pilgrims, kissing each step as he went up. Arrived at the top he embraced the Pope, and both went together side by side into the church, while the choir intoned the anthem 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'. They went at once to the 'confession', that is the space in front of the recess, and there knelt in prayer. Then the Pope and the Emperor, together with the Roman and Frankish magistrates, 'went down in like manner to the body of blessed Peter (*descendentes pariter ad corpus beati Petri*)'.[2]

The interpretation of this passage is of considerable importance in view of what happened a few years later. It certainly seems to imply that the sepulchral chamber could still be visited, on very great occasions, as late as 774. It is conceivable, however, that the actual vault

[1] St. Gregory of Tours, *In gloria Martyrum*, c. 27, ed. Krusch; or ed. Migne, *P.L.*, vol. lxxi, col. 728.

[2] *Lib. Pont.*, ed. Duchesne, i. 497.

had been closed before this, possibly even by Constantine, and that all that is meant is that the Pope and Emperor, after praying at the recess under the altar, went round under the apse to the chapel of the confession. But there seems no other example of a visit to this chapel being spoken of as a visit 'to the body', nor is it an appropriate phrase.

The one time when the relics were in danger seems to have been in 846, when the Saracens sailed up the Tiber, and for fourteen days ravaged the basilicas outside the walls, including, of course, St. Peter's, which was at that time unprotected. The Romans had good warning and plenty of time. It may have been that the access to the tomb was cut off, by building a wall across the entrance, and this is what seems likely to have happened. Immense damage was done by the Saracens. They wrecked altars and tombs above ground in search of treasure. But there is no reason to think that they penetrated to the actual tomb, or violated the relics. Such a catastrophe, if it had happened, would have resounded throughout Christendom.[1] But nothing of the kind is recorded. The altar above was ruined, we can still see the traces of the damage done to the recess under the altar, but the vault itself seems to have been walled up before they came, possibly many years before, and the tomb, we may believe, remained inviolate.

There is a story which bears upon this question which was printed by Bonanni,[2] who claims to be quoting a manuscript by Torrigio in the archives of St. Peter's. Della Porta, he says, who was at the time

[1] See, for more detailed discussion of all this question, Barnes, *St. Peter in Rome*, pp. 201 seq.

[2] Bonanni, *Templi Vaticani Historia*, p. 149.

the architect in charge of the extensive work which was being done by Clement VIII in connexion with the High Altar of St. Peter's and the altar of the Chapel of the Confession, reported one day to the Pope that an aperture (*foramen*) had been uncovered by him through which the tomb (*monumentum*) of St. Peter could be seen. The Pope therefore went to the place, taking with him three Cardinals, Bellarmine, Sfondrato, and Antoniano. A torch was held by the architect so as to shine through the hole, and by its light there could be made out the golden cross lying on the top of the sepulchre. The Pope ordered that most ancient altar to be left undisturbed where it was, and caused the aperture to be filled up with cement in his presence. 'All this', says Bonanni, 'Torrigio asserts to have been told by Cardinal Sfondrato to Aloisio Cittadino, canon of the Basilica, and to Giovanni Bartolino who was in charge of the said holy confession.'

If this story could be accepted as it stands it would be of very great importance, for it would prove absolutely that St. Peter's relics have not been disturbed and that the Saracens did not penetrate to the actual tomb. It was gold and treasure that they were seeking, and, if the gold cross is still where Constantine placed it, it is quite certain that the Saracens never saw it. But the actual text of Torrigio's statement has not been found, and though the whole story is too circumstantial not to have some foundation, one would like to have it in its original form.

There is, however, among the voluminous notes of Giacomo Grimaldi, who had so much to do with the rebuilding of St. Peter's in its later stage, one passage

which seems to make Torrigio's story more than doubtful. Grimaldi recounts how Calixtus II restored, enlarged, and reconsecrated the ancient altar of St. Silvester. Clement VIII determined to enclose this altar in the new and still larger one which is still there. During the work the original altar of St. Silvester was exposed to view, with the 'seal' (*sigillum*) of that saint, whatever that expression may denote, showing towards the apse of the church. The Pope ordered the fissures to be filled in after he had himself come to inspect the ancient altar which had thus been brought to view. The mention of 'that ancient altar' in Torrigio's story seems to make it certain that Grimaldi's statement is the true one, and that 'the cross of Constantine' was only a picturesque addition as the story grew.

So the actual state of the tomb of St. Peter must remain a mystery, not perhaps insoluble, but still a mystery. And in a world in which everything is being ruthlessly laid open, it is, perhaps, as Mgr Duchesne once said, 'not wholly loss that there should remain a few sacred spots whose secrets are left undisturbed and unknown'.

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